

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON RACISM**

**FINAL REPORT  
MARCH 2001**



## **PREFACE**

It is not normal in the life of a nation that over 1000 people gather together and of one mind address a matter of national life. Such was the mood at the Sandton Convention Centre, Gauteng from 31 August to 2 September 2000 when, responding to a call by President TM Mbeki, South Africans gathered to take a stand against racism. The South African Human Rights Commission was proud to be associated with this event. It was our view that an event of this nation cannot be reduced simply to a political spectacle. It had to be taken out of the political arena if we were to achieve the desired outcomes. It was our view, therefore, that the Commission was best placed to call South Africans together and to provide space for a genuine exchange of views about our country and its future.

The result was three days of very exciting dialogue, of genuine enthusiasm about our country and its future, some challenges which some South Africans took upon themselves and a new mood prevailing about values and the South African identity. In addition, the conference was able to come up with a basic document with clear principles to inform our common action and a programme which binds us all.

It was the TRC Final Report which called for a National Conference on Reconciliation. The National Conference on Racism was in many ways just such a conference. It was a watershed event in the history of our country. It brought South Africans together across all manner of divides. It put the mind of the country about racism beyond dispute. Racism cannot be tolerated and South Africans are resolved to act together to eradicate racism. Full stop.

What it now means is that South Africans must be helped to put their good intentions to good effect. We need to put flesh to the commitment to racial reconciliation. We need to provide opportunities for valuing our differences, our different histories and experiences and to open vistas for participation by every South African in building a new society founded on human dignity, equality, social justice and non-racialism. It also means that South Africans should not just value each other better, but that they get to learn from their differences and see in the other something that would make them better people and which would contribute to national life.

Reconciliation in South Africa is a big challenge. It is often bedevilled by confrontational politics. It has to transcend the hurdles erected by our past and the legacy of that past which lives with us today. More seriously, it is made all the more difficult by a predilection to denial and skewed understandings of democracy and liberalism - an acutely South African brand of conservative liberalism! This suggests also that the past does not matter. We must simply look to the future. It is also part of this conservativeness which claims that not much needs to be done today to remedy the effects of the past and that transformation is a threat to equality. When such notions persist, it is difficult to believe that we understand each other when we talk about change and the values enunciated by the Constitution cease to have any meaning. The result is cynicism about our national efforts. It also leads to indifference about the spectre of racism in our society. Racism thrives in an environment characterised by indifference and concern about one's own being only.

Last December, we began the process towards racial reconciliation. We are continuing our efforts to popularise the *South African Millennium Statement on Racism*. We are encouraged by the responses we have been receiving. We are also engaged in the development of a National Plan of Action for the Decade for National Mobilisation against Racism (2001-2010) which will be unveiled on 16 December 2001.

## **THANKS**

Our thanks go to the President of the Republic of South Africa for the vision of calling the National Conference and for the partnership that was forged with government to achieve this task. All the keynote speakers presented papers that we are satisfied will provide valuable reference material wherever studies on racism and South Africa are undertaken. We have reproduced them here in full. The presence of Prof Patricia J Williams of the University of Columbia Law School was a tremendous inspiration. The conference in many ways was made possible by the financial support of the donor community, almost all of them South African business corporations. We believe that we are carving out the beginnings of corporate citizenship which will shape the character of our national life. Our partners in this process were not only those who appear in the Acknowledgements section of this report. They were the many ordinary South Africans who dared to raise their voices. They were heard.

We acknowledge the help of Dr Joe Diescho who waded through vast amounts of paper and shaped this report. He has also drafted a useful Introduction to the Report. Prof Daria Roithmayr of the College of Law, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA formulated the guidelines for the group discussions. The facilitators and rapporteurs helped to make this the interactive and participatory conference we were longing for. Ms Kim Feinberg, Dr Thandiwe Sidzumo-Mazibuko and Dr Xolela Mangcu compiled the group reports. We thank them for their invaluable assistance.

N Barney Pitso  
CHAIRPERSON

Johannesburg,  
International Women's Day 2001 (8 March)

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

In his first annual State of the Nation Address as president to mark the official opening of parliament on 4 February 2000, President Thabo Mbeki announced that he had invited the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to convene a National Conference on Racism to be held in the year 2000. The President saw such a conference as a necessary and urgent mechanism in the ongoing process of establishing our democracy and nation building. This was consistent with the understanding of the National Government of South Africa that the racial divisions of the past had to be attended to proactively and conscientiously if the stated vision of national reconciliation was to be realised. In this address, President Mbeki made reference to the United Nations World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance due to be held in Durban, South Africa in August 2001. The President was anxious that as hosts, South Africa had to be the first to address its own problems with racism if it is to have credibility among the community of nations. He argued that:

We are convinced that this important initiative will help move our country faster towards the realisation of the goal contained in our Constitution of the creation of a non-racial society, as well as impact positively on our continuing struggle for a non-sexist society.

The South African Human Rights Commission prepared a framework document on the organisation of the National Conference. The document set out the basis, objectives and structure for the National Conference. The document set the conceptual value of the National Conference in the mission and values of the new South Africa as set out in the Constitutions of 1993 and 1996. Of special significance is the search for equality and the building of a non-racial society. Since the negotiated settlement in South Africa, national reconciliation has been considered paramount if peace and prosperity are to be enjoyed by all South Africans. Towards this end the post-amble to the 1993 interim Constitution is significant:

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society.

That was seven years before the National Conference. The first democratic government of national unity emphasised this vision of national unity and reconciliation. The problem is that such a focused attention to one singular ideal may have caused some to believe that equality did not matter at all, that the ill-treatment of others on the basis of their colour could continue unchecked. The idea that reconciliation was the paramount value for the new South Africa allowed all manner of violations to the Constitution to take place, it meant that the lives of ordinary South Africans did not change for the better. It also meant for many white people that the life of unjust privilege and advantage could continue while many remained under-privileged.

So, for many, reconciliation became a much abused and ill-understood concept. The TRC, frankly, did not help people to understand any better. The National Conference, therefore, was to be a major initiative at kick-starting transformation in South Africa. The idea was that it could place the concerns and experiences of many on the table,

challenge everyone to restate the vision that brought us all to the new South Africa and work together to achieve it. The objectives of the conference, therefore, were to encompass this purposeful mission of the conference.

The objectives for the conference were formulated as follows:

- To provide a platform for South Africans to share their experiences of racism and ensure that dialogue is sustainable.
- To engage one another in dialogue about race relations in a modern, democratic South Africa and to share common perspectives about how to build a non-racial, united and reconciled society.
- To analyse the nature, dynamics and manifestations of racism in a democratic society and to examine the reasons for the persistence of all forms of racism and intolerance.
- To make commitments about building a reconciled and united society in South Africa at all levels.
- To prepare for the 3rd United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in South Africa in August/September 2001.

Besides the objectives, the framework document developed a set of principles which would inform the nature and ethos of the conference. Every effort had to be made to ensure that the National Conference was truly *national*. This meant that the conference had to be as representative as possible of all the people, regions, races, political persuasions and opinions as possible. It was significant, therefore, there having been concern about the participation of white South Africans especially during the consultative process, that in fact white groups from the Mine Workers' Union to the Afrikanerbond participated fully in the conference itself. Traditional leaders were also visible and so were women, men and youth from all corners of our land. Second, it was resolved that the conference had to proceed by consultation. National consultations took place in different parts of the country from June onwards, radio, TV and print media covered debates about racism in different parts of the country. Consultative meetings were held with political parties, organised business, labour, local authorities and with academics. The conference itself had to be *interactive*. This challenged us to ensure that the conference did not just become a talk-shop but that everyone had to have an opportunity to react and to express their opinions and as such contribute to the outcomes of the conference. Finally, the conference had to be *outcomes-oriented*. Once again what was being said is that the conference had to develop an action -programme that all South Africans could own and that would guide them beyond the conference in their anti-racism programmes. In other words the duty to combat racism had to be owned by all South Africans.

The slogan and logo for the National Conference on Racism were designed to accentuate the message of dialogue. South Africans continued to live and socialise in racially exclusive iron cages. There was very little effective interaction across the colour-line. The idea was that the conference should promote dialogue, a medium of communication, on an equal footing among equals. All had to be free to communicate their opinions and views and others had to be willing to listen empathetically. The organisers eschewed the notion that the dialogue process be reduced to accusations and counter-accusations; they were not about making others feel guilty, neither were they set pieces for confessionals. Instead dialogue was to generate understanding and

common action. *Combating Racism: a Nation in Dialogue* was an appropriate slogan which captured the imagination of the people. It emphasised freedom of speech, in a safe environment and it promised that all will be listened to with respect. That is exactly what the previous *apartheid* regime effectively denied all South Africans black and white. Dialogue, it was proclaimed, had to be the feature of this new South Africa. The logo also conjured up this mental picture of movement and communication with its postal theme.

## **THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SAHRC)**

Besides producing the conceptual framework for the National Conference, the SAHRC convened the National Steering Committee. This brought together government, national institutions and civil society. Participating in this were the GCIS, CGE, SANGOCO and SANEF. The intention was to recognise that the conference was to be a partnership between government and civil society. There was no intention to relegate government to the role of a background supporter and instigator. There was recognition that government participation was critical if the outcomes of the National Conference were to have a genuinely national application. But a task like this can never be just the government's alone. Those who criticised the role of government in the National Conference were misguided. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) affirmed the principle that the first duty of states is to protect the rights of its citizens. Government cannot abdicate from that responsibility. A partnership with civil society produces better results because it can galvanise the whole of society and focus the minds of people on a critical and compelling issue. The issue of racism is such an issue. Besides the Steering Committee, we also made provision for a higher level of consultation with government. A group of ministers met with the Steering Committee to form a Reference Group. The Reference Group ensured that blockages were dealt with and views were exchanged.

Having said that, it was recognised by all parties that the SAHRC as a lead agency had to drive the process without undue pressure from government. All were equal partners in the process. The Commission had to preserve its independence and to act within the mandate granted it by the Constitution (Section 184), to

- promote respect for human rights and a culture of human rights;
- promote the protection, development and the attainment of human rights; and
- monitor and assess the observance of human rights in the Republic.

The SAHRC was best placed to lead the process towards combating and eradicating racism.

In addition, it was the SAHRC that was practically the best placed to oversee the process as it had already become the custodian of debates about the promotion of human rights in the country. As distinct from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was tasked with uncovering and dealing with past gross human rights violations, the SAHRC is the national institution established to entrench constitutional democracy and to promote respect for and observance of human rights for everyone without fear or favour.

When the SAHRC commenced its work, it realised that it had to address serious human rights issues that the TRC did not have as part of its brief, but which were critical if South Africa as a nation was to move towards a human rights culture to replace the hitherto prevailing racist history of the country. The first case that the SAHRC had to deal with as a commission was about racism. In fact, most of the complaints the SAHRC continually receives involve racism of one form or another. Of the known cases the Commission dealt with were racial incidents in education, violent racial attacks on farms, and the well-publicised inquiry into racism in the media.

## **SUMMARY OF THE PROVINCIAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**

After the SAHRC accepted the task of convening the National Conference on Racism in the second half of 2000, the Commission set aside the month of June 2000 to initiate several contacts and activities that would assist in spreading the word about the provincial consultations as well as the culminating National Conference later in the year. These initiatives included meetings with provincial legislatures and various stakeholders in the provinces.

The legislatures and sectoral leaders were then entrusted with making their constituencies aware of the provincial process and the purpose these meetings were to serve. The public meetings were to be held in all the provinces as part of the process of gauging the mood of the nation and identifying public opinions on racism. The provincial consultative process was scheduled for the month of July. The consultations were planned to make it possible for people's voices to be heard, even though they might not be able to participate in the Conference themselves.

In addition to meetings with leaders within the provinces, the SAHRC embarked on a media campaign, entailing media debates on radio and television and encouraged discussions, essays, art, poetry and drama in schools around the theme of racism. Visual materials such as posters, pamphlets and print ads were earmarked as important marketing tools for both the provincial consultations as well as the greater National Conference.

As planned, public meetings on racism were held in all nine provinces of South Africa during the course of July 2000. The meetings were designed to assist in a process of learning about the experiences South Africans have with racism, either from the perspective of perpetrator or victim in a sharing and learning environment. They were convened to facilitate a wide and open exchange of views amongst people in the respective provinces so that they would get to know the issues and one another better. The SAHRC felt that it was important for South Africans to hear one another articulate what they perceived as racism and how they experienced it in their current lives in a liberated South Africa.

The objectives of the provincial consultative process were spelt out quite clearly as follows:

- To provide a platform for South Africans to share their experiences about racism in dialogue with one another;
- To analyse the nature, dynamics and manifestations of racism in a democratic society and to examine the reasons for the persistence of all forms of racism;
- To assess the extent to which the vision of the South African Constitution is lived and experienced by South Africans and share common perspectives about how to build a non-racial, united and reconciled society;
- To make commitments about building a new, reconciled and united society in South Africa at all levels and to address the impacts of past racist policies and practices; and
- To prepare for the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, scheduled to take place in South Africa in August/September 2001.

The organisers of the National Conference appreciated that, in order to make the envisaged Conference meaningful, the idea had to be taken to the people first. Once the rural people had been brought on board, they would tell real stories that would in turn inform the deliberations at the main Conference. They also realised that the National Conference would not be an adequate platform for the organic exchange of views and experiences.

The narratives and submissions gathered at the provincial meetings were collated into one *Report on Provincial Consultative Process*. This Report was prepared for the use of all participants and became the basis of discussion during the National Conference on Racism in August/September. Reading the Report and being briefed about the Report at the National Conference itself was helpful to many people who were not privy to the provincial process. The stories from the provinces was very instructive to the National Conference participants, who felt that their own experiences were either similar or dissimilar to others' as a premise from which to start a dialogue. The information derived from the provincial experiences also contextualised certain realities that assisted participants to develop proactive strategies and mechanisms to respond realistically to present and future manifestations of racism in the country.

## **REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL REPORT AND SUBMISSIONS**

The consultative meetings in all the nine provinces of the country were an essential part of the build-up towards the National Conference in August/September and provided a platform for people in the provinces, together with the SAHRC, to prepare realistically for the national dialogue. They assisted the nation to develop a synthesis of an overall picture with regard to race relations in South Africa since the ushering in of the democratic dispensation; and provided the population and its leadership with the raw material with which to develop an informed framework aimed at combating racism.

As the convenor of these provincial consultations the SAHRC extended an open invitation to all residents in all walks of life in the provinces to listen to the stories of others and share their own in the interests of nation building. It was hoped at the time,



given the history of racism in the country, that South Africans of all race groups would appreciate and avail themselves of this opportunity to share their experiences across the racial divide for the sake of better mutual understanding.

This was not the case as a very small number of white South Africans came to the meetings. The absence of members of the white community sent a message to their black counterparts that they lacked interest and that the fight for a non-racial South Africa was left to the black people. Yet It was clear before and after the consultative meetings that racism affected all South Africans, either as victims or as perpetrators.

With the exception of two provinces, the provincial meetings were well attended and the discussions were frank and successful. The majority of the submissions, made either in writing or verbally, revealed three main patterns:

- First, and prevalent in the rural areas of Mpumalanga, Free State, North West and Northern Cape, is racism in the form of violent attacks against farm workers.
- Second, prevalent in urban areas, is blatant discrimination of black people in institutions such as schools, universities, colleges and banks.
- Third, local people evidence hostility and negative sentiments towards Africans from the rest of the continent, viewing these (illegal) immigrants as usurpers of the already limited employment opportunities in South Africa.

Many of the stories narrated during these meetings were extremely painful. Some were very heart-warming and gave rise to the hope that most South Africans are committed to building a New South Africa wherein all the citizens would be accorded equal rights and be expected to give equal treatment to others.

In the main, submissions articulated the same messages of anger, frustration, sadness and disappointment with the realities in the new South Africa. Those who made submissions attested that not much has changed in the area of their relationships with white South Africans. Most people expressed the view that they were getting a raw deal despite the efforts of blacks to reconcile with their white counterparts.

It must be reiterated that the provincial consultative process would have contributed more towards a deeper dialogue and consequently propelled the process of national reconciliation had all racial groups participated. Despite the efforts of the SAHRC to encourage all sides of the racism experience to be heard, there was reluctance on the part of white, Indian and coloured South Africans to participate. In areas such as the Western Cape, where one would have expected more coloureds to participate, and KwaZulu-Natal where more Indians reside, the meetings were marked by their conspicuous absence. Africans came in greater numbers and volunteered their stories more readily, whereas the cathartic nature of sharing experiences would have been helpful for all groups in the country to move closer toward a common understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a South African today.

The few whites who came acknowledged how uncertain they were about their role in the discussion, and even felt that they would be put on the spot to account for ‘the sins of white people.’ In the end they shared with the rest how liberated they felt to be vindicated and/or to be affirmed as South Africans despite what had been said. They went on to express a sadness that not many white people had been there to witness

that black people were not angry at them as white people, but that they were expressing their hurt at the hands of racism. At these meetings both the sharers and the hearers appreciated that in this kind of frank and personal exchange their common humanity emerged.

In addition to the provincial meetings and submissions prior to the National Conference, the SAHRC commissioned two research papers by Professor Norman Duncan from the University of Venda, in collaboration with Dr Cheryl de la Rey, from the University of Cape Town, and Professor Ben Magubane, a renowned scholar on the issue of race. Duncan and De la Rey's paper: *'Racism: A Psychological Perspective'* provided a broad overview of existing theories of race, gave a psychological exposé of the reality and manifestations of race and suggested various psychological ways to deal with racism. Magubane's paper: *'Racism in the Age of Europe'*, provided an account of the evolution, materialisation and institutionalisation of white supremacy, and how in the process of the internationalisation of the white supremacist ideology, Africans or 'non-whites' in general became supreme casualties. Both these papers were prepared to provide background material for the National Conference, and were available upon registration at the Conference.

## **CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

The Conference Programme was designed so as to balance carefully the various concerns expressed during the consultative process. There was a need to ensure that government owned its role in the eradication of racism without allowing the presentation to descend into a party-political platform. For that reason, while all political parties were invited, it was felt to be inadvisable to give platform to political parties as such. Keynote speeches were kept to the minimum and those invited were generally thought to be experts in their fields. Finally, the day was divided into morning for addresses, afternoons for group discussions and evenings for entertainment.

The National Conference on Racism was held at the new Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, from 30 August through 2 September 2000 under the slogan, *COMBATING RACISM: A Nation in Dialogue*. The conference was opened by President Mbeki and closed by Deputy President Zuma.

Over 1000 South Africans representing diverse groups from civil society, racial, linguistic and cultural groups, social and political structures of society, government at all levels, independent national institutions, statutory bodies and public enterprise institutions gathered at the Conference during three days of deliberations on racism. About 20 observers from Australia, Brazil, the United States of America and Nigeria as well as observers from international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) based in Europe attended the Conference. In the light of the forthcoming United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance to be held in South Africa from 31 August through 2 September 2001, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva was also represented.

Each day typically had one or more keynote speakers addressing a Plenary Session of all the delegates, followed by a “question and answer” period. Delegates then split up into as many as 30 small “working groups” to discuss sub-themes of the Conference. In addition, a remarkable exhibition was displayed on another level of the Convention Centre, for which displays were either purchased or borrowed. The exhibits featured photographic works by Alf Khumalo, artworks from the Terry Kurgan/Cape Times display used at the International “Beyond Racism” Conference in Cape Town in May 2000, the “Ipopeng Exhibition” by Lambert Moraloiki and Brigette Hertell, the International Print Portfolio (IPP) exhibition by the Artists for Human Rights Trust. Also displayed were some of the winning entries from the SAHRC Annual School Poster Competitions on various human rights themes, displays from the provincial consultative activities and an innovative series of mobiles by a young Cape Town artist. Overall, in their different ways, these visual works conveyed a powerful message of South Africa’s turbulent and racist history, and added depth to the experiences of the delegates.

In his address, President Mbeki alerted the Conference to the overall need in post-apartheid South Africa to attend to white fears and black aspirations as two sides of the same coin. Mbeki expressed confidence that, as a basis for national dialogue, South Africans had the wisdom, ingenuity and sensitivity to the human condition to overcome racism. Among the keynote speakers were Prof. Jakes Gerwel, Prof. Patricia Williams from the USA and Ms Nozipho January-Bardill who is a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Three main themes were adopted for the focus of the Conference, namely: The History, Nature and Sources of Racism; The Consequences, Impact and Contemporary Forms of Racism; and Strategies to Combat Racism: The Way Forward. Each theme was elaborated into sub-themes and working groups deliberated on the sub-themes.

The first theme sought to deal with racism in South Africa from a historical and international perspective and to unpack the nature and different meanings of racism as they manifested themselves over time. The groups dealing with this theme were also asked to delineate relevant linguistic, religious and cultural causes and specificities of racist histories. Ethnicity as a tool and an expression of racism was also examined. Economic processes were also identified as part of the elaboration of the racist ideology. Under this rubric, social behaviour, stereotyping and forms of intolerance emerged in the discussion as complexities of racism. Responses such as anti-racism and denial were inevitable outcomes of racism.

The second theme was about identifying and describing the mechanisms by which racism has become part of the institutional, structural and systemic areas of ordinary life in South Africa. This is important because when racism has been in practice in a place for a long time, people become numb to the forms in which it manifests itself and tend to look only at people’s behaviour and not the broader reality. For example, after a while, people become less able to discern racism in institutions that deliver housing, health care and other forms of social services. In South Africa, the forms of spatial inequalities that exist are a direct consequence of the social arrangements that buttressed the white supremacist ideology. In the end, it appears normal that white people have better facilities whereas blacks have the worst facilities. These

inequalities then reproduce themselves in other spheres of structural and institutional life like education and training, employment of black people and worse, black women who are at the lowest rung of social engineering.

Before the National Conference, the SAHRC had already conducted an inquiry into the media that revealed that racism was prevalent in the manner in which the media represented white viewpoints versus black viewpoints in South Africa. Racist viewpoints continue to find expression in hate speech and on the Internet.

In the area of administration of justice, and in particular the country's justice system, racism continues to impede the courts' ability to dispense justice. The group dealing with this situation found that a system that is accustomed to treating justice as the preserve of white people will both take a long time to introduce a human rights oriented jurisprudence across the board and require transformation of the people entrusted with this task. A predominantly white judiciary continues to adjudicate in ways repugnant to what the Constitution of the Republic requires.

It was acknowledged that the South African economy is the best on the African Continent, apartheid notwithstanding. Yet, in the existing market place and even in the heralded globalising economy, racism rears its ugly head. The globalising economy as such is no guarantee that the existing disparities between the rich and the poor with a racial character will not continue and even get worse.

It was clear to the group tackling this theme that racism was rife in the realms of finance, business, trade and technology. In South Africa black people have far less access to the information highway and even to basic business and trade opportunities.

The third theme was the future and strategies to combat racism through law reform, a human rights culture buttressed by appropriate legislation, monitoring mechanisms and vigorous methods to enforce policies and laws. The Employment Equity Act and similar legislation could take the country a long way in accelerating the pace of social change.

Under this theme, the movement towards anti-racism, racism awareness and the general need for social transformation in the country are critical components of a non-racist culture. Towards this end, there was strong feeling that the existing legislative framework should be augmented by a deliberate engagement of the agents of social change, such as the fora where communities are involved and the media.

Education and training should be geared deliberately towards the inculcation of a culture of tolerance. The role of culture and the arts, as was experienced with apartheid, is vital in the elaboration and legitimisation of a new ethos with its own language, vocabulary and different expressions.

Importantly, the family and civil society institutions remain the corner stones of any society. If redirected and retooled, they can become the most potent instruments in combating racism in its different forms. Religion and language and the role of ethnic and other minorities cannot be overlooked in the project of nationbuilding and reconciliation. They are the parts of the desired greater and stronger whole, which can

only develop once the parts appreciate that their strength derives from the superior and more powerful whole.

The outcome of the working groups' discussions on the sub-themes was then consolidated into a report on each theme and presented to the Conference Plenary Session.

The mood of the conference throughout was engaging, participants undertaking the tasks of the conference with determination and singular resolve. Discussions were frank and honest; sometimes there was anger and passion but the spirit of the conference was sustained throughout. It was a spirit of listening, of sensitivity and tolerance, of differing views and opinions about the interpretation of history, about the understanding and experiences of racism, about action strategies to eliminate racism and about a vision for the future. The character of the conference was one of dialogue, as the slogan directed. Critical to any strategy for dealing with racism, it was widely agreed, was the need to acknowledge the damage done by apartheid, recognise the effects of that past on contemporary social arrangements and the reality of ongoing racism, direct and indirect, formal and informal, structural or institutional, in South African society.

## **RESUME OF SPEECHES**

In addition to President Thabo Mbeki, there were a few selected persons who were invited to give keynote speeches. The main aim of these speeches was to set the tone and provide some account of racism in South Africa historically and contextually.

In his welcoming address, Dr. Barney Pityana, the chairperson of the SAHRC, compared the First National Conference on Racism to other epoch-making events like the National Convention that ushered in the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955. He argued that the structural organisation of our society has continued into the present dispensation and that race stratification of South African society continues to be the norm. Racial attitudes are not sufficiently challenged by the new legal system and the legal norms are not far-reaching enough to stem the continuation of some of these practices. Since 1994 the invisibility of black people in large segments of our national life continues. Racism will threaten our constitutional basis and our credibility if our legal and constitutional system is unable to protect its citizens and does not extend opportunity equally to all. At the heart of the making of the new South Africa is undoubtedly the unmaking of some of the old; and this means re-valuing Africa and much that the continent has to offer. Dr Pityana saw this conference as initiating a national consensus, a movement against racism in all its forms. This Conference should produce a national resolve against racism. This requires a resort to human reason, human capacity and the values we share, a commitment as anti-racism activists.

President Thabo Mbeki set the tone for the Conference by articulating what the nature and complexity of the racial problem was that this unique Conference was expected to help address. He chronicled all the prevailing vantage points South Africans had with regard to racism, and what the different perspectives held to be the way to address it. Mbeki situated both the black and white perspectives as equally problematic and thus

needing to be attended to in a holistic manner. He stated in no uncertain terms that, by virtue of South Africa's recent past, racism is one of the most contentious issues on the national agenda. President Mbeki went on to criticise those who argue that people who point to the persistence of racism in South Africa and who propagate affirmative action are themselves racist. He pointed out that there are also those who argue that it is those who have benefited from centuries of colonial and apartheid racial domination who want to maintain their privileged positions at all costs, who deny racism in our midst. Mbeki contextualised the process of reconciliation as one where the victims have been more willing to forgive than the perpetrators have been able to contribute to the process of national reconciliation. He emphasised the urgency of the dialogue on racism to prevent social instability. Acknowledging that no country has been able to successfully create a non-racial society, Mbeki proposed that South Africa had a particular challenge that evolved out of South Africa's unique history of racism as a fundamental organising principle of the state. Therefore, history that has been buttressed by law and finance would be harder to turn around. Thus, the two-nation syndrome is a dilemma to be tended with great circumspection. In his counsel on the way forward, the President invoked the South African Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and Acts of the South African parliament such as the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination and the Employment Equity Acts as the pillars on which the anti-racism culture should be constructed. In his conversation, the President warned: "If white South Africa is fearful of the future because of what it might lose, black South Africa looks forward to the future because of what it will gain." He then concluded: "We are convinced that as a people, both black and white, we have the wisdom, ingenuity and sensitivity to the human condition that will drive and enable us to overcome the demon of racism."

Professor Jakes Gerwel discussed racism as an offshoot of the European renaissance, which evolved with a total disregard for the other, namely the non-European. In examining South Africa's history of race relations, he said that the role of racism has been too crucial in the making of what is today the South African nation. Gerwel saw the Conference against racism as part of the history of racism in South Africa. He warned that racism is not a timeless disease against which people must be inoculated. He further warned poignantly that the cessation of hostilities between the main political protagonists and the constitutional political dispensation was but a beginning and the divisions and injustices will take more time and energy to eradicate.

Professor Patricia Williams gave a moving presentation of the American experiences with racism in general and the ideology of white supremacy in particular. She drove her points home by narrating that she was a professor of contract law, which she described as the law about alienation. She related the story of two young women Ivy League university students who decided to sell their fertile eggs (university type eggs) on the market so that families in need of designer babies would purchase them. The one was white and the other black. The young black student had better grades in the university than the white one, but the buyers in the market bought the white student's eggs. The black student, who had all the intelligence and Ivy League credentials the struggling egg buyers wanted, but did not have blue eyes, had no buyer for her eggs. She was left filling out financial aid forms, whereas the white student sold her eggs without difficulty.

In her discussion, Williams delineated different contemporary categories of racism, namely the relation of race to economic concerns and class, questions of pseudo-science and neo-Darwinian eugenic arguments that touch on issues of merit, affirmative action and education, and the questions of taboo, untouchability, aesthetics and quarantine.

Being a descendant of former slaves herself, Williams's passionate account of racism in the world brought home the ineluctability of racial prejudice and the pervasiveness of the economy of race. She provided examples of how practitioners of racism often deny racism in different ways. One of the most famous American Presidents, Thomas Jefferson, fathered at least one, if not all six, of the children of his slave Sally Hemings. Sally Hemings herself is recorded to have had the same father as the white wife of Jefferson, but the relationship was never acknowledged, such that it is said that Jefferson is rumoured to have admitted fathering such a 'child', but denied that the child was his 'daughter'. Prof. Williams continued to provide a vivid picture of life during the era of American slavery and the extent to which black people were demeaned by their white masters, who denied the real human relationships they had with their slaves. When slaves reacted to affirm their humanity, they were described as crazy and stupid in an ongoing attempt to deprive them of their humanity. These narratives were helpful to the South African audience that must come to terms with the reality that racism is part of the make-up of the modern western state modelled along the American democratic experience, and thus must not be taken as something that disappears overnight.

Williams then implored the conference never to stop or rest, as the struggle against racism is an eternal moral issue.

Dr Pallo Jordan went straight to the heart of the matter when he said: "Racism, like tyranny and hell, is hard to conquer." In his reflection, he gave an exposé of how after World War II, South Africa became the fountainhead of racism and was therefore best placed to become the beacon of a working non-racial democracy in the world. This, he explained, has less to do with what South Africa can do realistically and more to do with the expectation the international community has placed upon South Africa. He placed the struggle toward non-racialism in the context of an African Renaissance, which he traced back to the 1960s with the Negro assertions that "Black is beautiful." The quest for self-affirmation has been the cardinal component of the struggle by those who were not respected by their oppressors. He also cautioned that the process of globalisation could spread poverty much faster than it would wealth and that it would also lead less to an integration of wealth and more to the disintegration of nations and communities.

Ms Nozipho January-Bardill echoed and underscored what other speakers had articulated: that racism is alive and well. The strength of her presentation was in unpacking the state of racism in the new South Africa and how people have learnt to nuance the same reality with different phraseology. She gave a chronicle of the changing forms of racism and explained how, if people are not conscious of what they say, they would be bringing back the scourge of racism in different clothing. For instance, the usage of words like diversity, identity and culture, that have become commonplace in South Africa, are more often than not mere substitutes for racial

identification with the ultimate goal of separateness. In the pursuit of the right to 'self-determination', the focus on a human rights culture is lost. In this case, we are back to where we were. Her presentation was also instructive when she spoke about the menace of crime in South Africa to the extent that it is spoken about as though it affects only the white population with blacks as perpetrators. This 'white' perspective on crime does not only re-racialise South Africa, but guarantees less protection for 'black criminals'. January-Bardill depicted a South Africa where transformation in the education sector is seen as a threat to white hegemony.

She left the conference with a question:

How can we educate an economically deprived society to respect the human rights of their fellow compatriots when they feel their own human rights and particularly their social and economic rights are not protected when homelessness, unemployment and the lack of other basic human needs remain a threat to their lives?

Professor Kader Asmal focussed on government's efforts in the process of deracialising South Africa. He focussed particularly on the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act as the centrepiece of government's commitment to this process. In addition, he highlighted the role of the Equality Review Committee, which has been established to monitor the accomplishments under this act. He then committed the education sector to helping to build non-racialism by, amongst others, working on twinning programmes that would connect mainly black schools in the townships and traditionally white schools that enjoy better resources. Asmal underscored the importance of introducing at least one African language to all South African schools in an effort to allow the learners to appreciate the idioms and cultures that have been marginalised under apartheid.

Ms Antjie Krog said that apartheid developed in power relations as advantages and disadvantages located in colour. Prejudice was lodged in colour. Apartheid therefore has a twisted morality. She brought a self-awareness to the conference when she shared the following sentiments. As a white Afrikaans-speaking South African person what she had learnt about humanity, about being human, about humaneness, she learnt from black people. She also said that what she had learnt about reconciliation, she learnt from black people. She also cautioned South Africans to be mindful of the fact that every person has, within him or her, the capacity to care or to kill. Inasmuch as people know when injustice occurs, white South Africans know what they did.

Deputy President Jacob Zuma closed the conference by saying that much progress had been made in the three days of discussion in "ending this nightmare [of racism] that has lasted for more than 350 years." He reiterated: "We have no choice but to end the nightmare, and we can only do this if we are bold and fearless about confronting the racism that is deeply embedded in our society, the racism that continues to dehumanise our people every day." He said that the dialogue on racism had only just begun and that the conscious confrontation of racism is the beginning of our homecoming as a nation. "We have agreed to embark on a self-conscious effort against racism that empowers all our citizens to actualise a humanist vision." He supported the recommendation that an anti-racist movement be formed and that the South African government would take seriously the call for a racism barometer and a racism audit.



He looked forward to the United Nations Conference on Racism to be held in South Africa next year:

This is a struggle that united the majority of humanity in action for a democratic South Africa. The world joined us because it was conscious of the fact that our struggle was part of the efforts of the human family for a world without racism and prejudice. If they expect us to play a central role in this continuing struggle, it is because they are confident that we have the character and the grit to do what history expects of us.

All the keynote addresses as well as inputs by panellists and from the floor confirmed the existence of racism as a dehumanising force in society. Without any exception, each speaker brought a message with a sense of urgency and a call to action. They were all in unison that, for the sake of peace and stability to be maintained as corner stones of democracy, and for the purpose of human progress, racist practices had to be eradicated. The entire Conference enjoined the speakers in the acclamation that government and its institutions cannot mount this task alone, that neither progressive policies nor legislation would suffice to root out habits as old as the nation state itself. In fact, the agenda to take on racism is one that commits the entire civil society, its institutions and its agents of change.

The invocation of a national movement against racism is positive in that it mobilises and empowers civil society to assume activist roles in combating the existing state of affairs. Such a step however, empowering as it may sound, has immediate limitations.

First, the idea of such a movement is too amorphous to be practical in the context of the accomplishments South Africa has made with its democratic dispensation. The accolades South Africa has received internationally with the ushering in of democracy have to do with the fact that race was said to play a less significant role than expected, given the history of South Africa. The liberation movement, as it moved to the trough of power, embraced democracy and its promises as the *deus ex machina* of social change. The movement's choice of non-racialism as an organising principle and mechanism to fight racism tended to obviate the directness that a working strategy to combat racism requires. It must be mentioned also that the zeal with which the democratically elected government has bent over backwards in its attempts to win whites over and bring them on board has been a premature celebration of equality and truncated the message of anti-racism. In the process, the noble intentions of those with an agenda to end racism in the country have been taken to mean that racism is dead. Consequently, both covert and overt racism is alive and well in the new South Africa.

The result is that in the end, after more than half a decade in power, there is a return to a movement which suggests that very little has been accomplished in addressing the very question that created conditions for the struggle to be fought and to be won.

Second, movements are, by definition, strong in denouncing what they are against, but often do not succeed in enunciating what they are for. Human experiences demonstrate how movements are about *freedom from* (oppression, colonialism), rather than *freedom to* change, create and build a new society.

Third, the call by the government that civil society must end racism in the context that the government was elected on a change ticket and has been in power for more than six years, suggests that the government does not have enough power to end racism,

and was an admission by government that the democratic accomplishments have tended to perpetuate rather than combat racism. It is a rather precarious state of affairs when those with power to change underestimate and submerge themselves as part of the powerless in decrying racism. The fact of the matter is that government and civil society neither experience racism equally nor are they equal partners in this task. The relationship between the state and civil society has to be situated within the context of an electoral system that is the hallmark of democratic governance. In other words, every five years, South African civil society will regroup and elect a government on the basis of delivery, not solidarity. In this sense, it must be appreciated that government has a duty to govern and civil society a duty to change government. The speeches neither addressed this problem nor took into account how power relations are part of change in South Africa.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the Conference succeeded in breathing life into a 'new' struggle and created a necessary platform for a fear-free exchange of views on racial experiences, nothing immediate and concrete is demonstrable. The very idea of a decade-long struggle against racism as articulated in the South African Millennium Statement takes away the sense of urgency of the situation and the immediacy of the very real tasks at hand. One of the immediate questions many ask is whether this conference is not yet another of many previous conferences that set the stage for another conference or more conferences, and in the process, generate a culture of creating institutions whose *raison d'être* is their own existence and not a quest for real solutions.

## **SUMMARY OF THE WORKING GROUPS**

The Conference was divided into more than 30 working groups, all with the task of unpacking the issues under the rubrics of the three main themes and to come up with proposals on the way forward. Each group had a facilitator, a rapporteur and resource person. Each group had a written document that evolved from the group discussion and group reports were submitted for the consumption of the whole Conference. From these reports the following summary has been compiled.

### *Theme 1: The History, Nature and Sources of Racism*

The working groups that worked on the first theme: 'The History, Nature and Sources of Racism' took the theme in various directions and various lengths. For a working definition of racism, the Conference turned to the United Nations, which defined racism as:

any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

There was general consensus that racism in South Africa has its origin in the socio-economic and political history of the country, going back to the colonial quest for resources and new markets as part of European imperialism and expansionism.

In order to sustain and develop permanent settlements in their new-found lands after the 'discovery' of the Cape of Good Hope, colonialists engaged in brutal campaigns

to dispossess the native peoples of their lands. In their quest to extend the settlements, acquire cheap forms of labour and create new forms of economic activity, colonial strategies of land dispossession through force, forms of barter systems, destruction of social structures and indigenous African values and imposition of European religion and languages all laid the foundations for economic dependency and racial domination in South Africa.

In the aftermath of the wars of dispossession and resistance, settler colonialists sought to consolidate their gains and prepare for permanent and sustained domination. To this end, the colonialists denied the 'natives' all opportunities of development, economic participation and capital accumulation.

The Land Act of 1913, by which about 80% of the arable land was allocated to about 13% of the total population of South Africa, was a major instrument of land dispossession. With the dispossession of economically active people from their land came the destruction of African values and existing social cohesion and personal dignity. The migrant labour system in the mines and on the farms and forced removals resulted in the skewed economic development with a stark racial character. Consequently, racism was institutionalised and the rise of Afrikaner power codified the older practices of economic development at the expense of black life. These practices were the foundations of the latter apartheid repressive laws and proscriptions that have left the edifices and legacies likely to linger on for a long while in a democratic South Africa.

The working groups identified many areas in which racism manifests itself. Amongst the most obvious forms of racism in South Africa are abject poverty and the lack of infrastructure and basic facilities in most black rural areas. Underdevelopment in areas of health care, education, service delivery, housing and welfare services, and general lack of human resource capacity, is a direct outcome of racist practices. In addition, the history of racism has led to an emphasis on tribalism and ethnicity as a form of divide-and-rule, ethnic prejudice and xenophobia among the oppressed majority of South Africans. This is important to appreciate that racism is not merely a black-white divide.

The group also dealt with more economic sources and forms of racism and pointed out that, as a result of the economic history of racism, denial has become an important constitutive part of race relations in South Africa, to the extent that many white South Africans and white people generally in the world have come to hold the view that black people cannot be trusted with power.

#### *Theme 2: Contemporary Forms of Racism: Consequences and Impact*

It is clear to most people in South Africa that racism has become embedded (hardwired) in the psyche of people living here. Contemporary forms of racism are institutional, structural and systemic, sparing no one on either side of the perpetrator-victim schism.

The bulk of the assessment of contemporary forms of racism was around the systemic alienation of black people from land and a critical mass of economic opportunities in virtually all manner of institutions in the country that consider blacks as a risk and not

very reliable investment areas. There is a lack of access to capital and credit facilities that would enable black people to own land and have better housing.

Racial spatial planning continues in the country despite the constitutional promises of equal access. Apart from the physical separation of living spaces occupied by whites versus the spaces occupied by blacks, there are vast differences in the quality of the space. Historically, whites have been given better services and it will be a daunting task to narrow this gap. These inequalities continue to reproduce themselves as goods become unaffordable to those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the areas of housing, health care and general socio-economic development that lopsidedness of development bears direct testimony to the legacy of a long racist past. Both in the provincial consultations and during the National Conference itself, tales were told about how white doctors refuse to treat black patients and simply refuse to work in black areas.

Life on farms is an issue that was studied with a view to explaining some of the violence and human rights abuses on the farms. Farm schools provide an education that is below standard as they are not conducive environments for proper learning. The message of reconciliation has not been internalised by white farm owners as they continue to differentiate between blacks who are in power such as the President, Ministers and MECs who are accorded respect and the majority of black South Africans who are still seen as 'kaffers' and are thus continually demeaned by their employers. Stories were told about white farmers who would address their employees by ridiculing the President as a 'kaffer' because he does not own a farm. Often, white farmers vent their frustrations at the political changes they had not expected on their black employees who in turn are more assertive about their human rights.

Racism continues to rear its head in the transformation process in the country. For instance, as more black families move into previously white areas, white residents leave and property value is even said to go down in such 'integrating' areas.

Long held stereotypes about race are still the order of the day, and often lead to unpleasant consequences. Examples include the unreliability of black people as good users of land, credit loans and even as maintainers of homes. White South Africans are ignorant about or ignore historical backgrounds to some of the characteristics of black residential areas. Littering, which is generally the eyesore in black areas has some of its origin in the official dumping of rubbish in black areas to clear white areas.

Racism continues to be a thorny issue in sporting codes and in the leisure and recreational sectors of the country. The apartheid legacy is still very visible in predominantly white sports such as tennis, golf, ice hockey and the national rugby teams where black participation is very minimal despite the fact that the majority of the population is black. On the other hand soccer remains predominantly black. Consequently sporting codes that represent a black majority are badly funded compared to white codes.

Xenophobia in South Africa is a major manifestation of racism. Africans from other African countries bear the wrath of black South Africans who perceive them as

usurpers of the already limited job opportunities that they themselves are vying for. Stories were heard about South African-born blacks who were either 'harassed' by the police or local black South Africans for being too dark or too tall; therefore they were *amakwerekwere* who should not be here. Malusi Gigaba, one of the leaders of the ANC Youth League, was interrogated a few times by law enforcement officials about the fact that he is "too dark to be South African". African asylum seekers and refugees are often treated differently from asylum seekers from Europe and elsewhere. African migrants are also stereotyped as HIV/AIDS carriers and therefore an unwanted danger. The debate on HIV/AIDS heightens this stereotyping and works well in the context of South Africa's racist history.

There is also a clear intersection between race, gender and class. Given the history of South Africa's race relations, coupled with the African patriarchal cultures, all of which have been amplified by the Judeo-Christian orthodoxies, the African female is the lowest in the hierarchy and is therefore doubly oppressed. The fact that more than 51% of South Africa's total population are women, and that more women per capita raise children as single mothers, has little impact on the reality of (white) male domination. The practices, customs, habits and traditions that exclude women from accessing property are still there, even though the Constitution and an increasing number of legislative measures are addressing these imbalances.

The successive acts of land expropriation over many decades left a legacy that is visible on the land today. The process of land acquisition by people from formerly disadvantaged communities is proving to be strewn with racial attitudes and impediments. Spatial disparities have a way of reproducing themselves over time. For instance, land previously occupied by blacks is not only seen as unprofitable, but unproductive, due both to its current condition and location.

The last but not least contemporary manifestation of racism is in the attitudes of those who were oppressed and who have internalised the myth of black inferiority. A consequence of the pedagogy of oppression is that the oppressed believes that s/he is not equal to the oppressor. Further, when the oppressed assumes power, s/he becomes more oppressive of the very people who look like her/him. Part of the disappointment expressed by people, especially in the provinces, is that the ANC Government has ceased to feel for them and feel more for the former oppressor who must be reassured of safety through the process of reconciliation.

The groups dealing with this theme commended the democratically elected Government of South Africa on its attempts to protect and assist refugees and asylum seekers since South Africa signed the United Nations Convention of July 1952 and ratified the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Protocol pertaining to refugees.

The Theme 2 cohort went on to suggest some ways to deal with problem of refugees and asylum-seekers in South Africa. First, that there be strengthening of legal standards to deal with refugees more humanely. Second, that harmful terminology such as "illegal aliens" be replaced with "unauthorised migrants". Third, that the South African refugee Act be situated within the framework of the South African Migration Act. Fourth, that refugees' and asylum seekers' socio-economic rights and access to the country's services be attended to. To this end, the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee was recommended that would ensure access by refugees

to basic services regarding health care, education and shelter. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was urged to engage the South African government in setting up a social cluster for, for example, burden-sharing so that South Africa could champion this within the SADC region and to strengthen anti-xenophobia campaigns. Further, religious organisations were encouraged to facilitate effective local integration and information dissemination on refugees in Africa, and to place xenophobia on their strategic agendas. Media organisations were urged to attend conferences on refugee concerns in order to position the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers positively. Civil society and labour organisations in South Africa were urged to forge strategic partnerships with the government in addressing the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in the country.

### *Theme 3: Strategies to Combat Racism: The way Forward*

The groups that tackled 'Strategies to Combat Racism: The way Forward' worked towards generating concrete ideas, strategies and proposals on how to rid South Africa of racism. Due to the difficulty of generating ideas that would cover and work for most of the sectors in the country, this was too daunting a task for the few days. The working groups on the way forward were also conscious of the fact that the greater Conference was expecting to hear from them what to do after the Conference. Following is a paraphrasing of what was presented to the Conference.

#### *Law Reform and Human Rights:*

There is a great need to transform the judicial system in the country through relevant and interventive legislation that would prepare for adequate monitoring and implementation of requirements by institutions. In addition to the Constitution, the Employment Equity Bill of 1999 and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Discrimination Act of 2000 were identified as critical, save that there was no adequate infrastructure within civil society to implement the laws.

Education and training should be utilised as instruments to generate awareness in the public about legislation that prevents racism.

Government was seen to have an obligation in the promotion of equality in the public sector.

Land reform needs to be speeded up to avoid further frustration on the part of those who are land hungry.

There was a recommendation to government to set up a Parliamentary Standing Committee to oversee legislation on human rights and race relations, especially while the judiciary remained fractured and unrepresentative of the broader society.

Legislation is required to deal with xenophobia, the status of refugees and asylum seekers. Ongoing training of court officials should be compulsory to ensure fairness, and consistency and the rule of law.

National and local institutions are in need of orientation to become more accountable and equitable.

There ought to be an ongoing audit of Chapter 9 institutions and others such as universities to ensure that they are complying with anti-racism/discrimination measures and relevant acts of parliament. The SAHRC, compatible NGOs, traditional structures and components of civil society should be tasked with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of practices that promote equality in the country.

*Anti-racism, Racism-awareness and Social Transformation:*

Diversity as an acknowledged reality in South Africa should be treated as a source of cultural richness rather than a source of division and conflict. This principle must be applied in areas of culture, religion and language where people should assume personal and organisational responsibility for their involvement in the well being of society.

Affirmative Action must be seen and used in a manner that transforms the workplace, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The business sector needs to be encouraged and if need be incentivised to play its role in deracialising South Africa, just as it did in entrenching apartheid.

Constitutional education should never be taken for granted as it forms the cornerstone for a culture of tolerance and diversity in the New South Africa.

Government tendering processes need to be made less complicated to allow ordinary people to participate in them.

The role of the religious communities cannot be overemphasised as they are a key agent of a socialisation process that demystifies stereotyping by both blacks and whites.

A need for an Anti-Racism Charter was identified with the Presidency as a key player in its monitoring.

*Education and Training towards a Culture of Tolerance:*

The word “tolerance” needed to be defined, as it means different things to different people. It was decided to use the definition used in *the United Nations’ Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, November 16th, 1995*. The Declaration sets forth the intention of Member Nations to take all positive measures necessary to promote tolerance in the world’s societies. Tolerance is defined in the Declaration as:

respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our worlds cultures, our forms of expression and way of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

Tolerance as a vital part of growing a democracy in South Africa should be given more meaning and mobility so that the people of South African can begin to inscribe it in their hearts. To accomplish this goal, the values of *Ubuntu*, acceptance, respect, honouring diversity, the right to dignity, acceptance of self and others must be encapsulated in the concept of tolerance.

While there must be an acceptance that attitudes cannot be legislated, the role of education in shaping values and morals of a people must be harnessed. Similarly, a culture of learning must be inculcated in the student population so that students realise that they are a part of a community. In so doing the youth can be prepared to recognise racist behaviour and deal with it in accordance with the values of diversity and tolerance. A crucial part of education and training must entail an appreciation that rights are always accompanied by responsibilities.

The South African education system must also begin to inculcate the culture of sharing. This could be achieved by introducing the idea of twinning schools, whereby learners and teachers are encouraged to share resources and knowledge for the benefit of all and the community. The Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the SAHRC could devise and produce a manual to this effect.

*The Role of Arts and Culture:*

Culture, roughly defined as a set of values and a celebration of diversity, together with the arts, must be used as a vehicle to channel the energies and activities of a society. Against the background of the white supremacy that destroyed African self-expression, a plea is made to resuscitate African and other cultures in South Africa - not in an attempt to re-racialise, but to engender self-pride in diversity.

There is a strong call for at least one African language as a mandatory subject in the school curriculum. The state and the private sector should make resources available for this purpose.

The media, both electronic and print, especially the SABC as a public broadcaster, should be part of racially sensitive advertising in the country, and should be tasked with promoting pride in a South African culture.

*The Family and Civil Society Institutions:*

The family as the basic unit of society needs to be celebrated and given prominence in South Africa. Parents must be tasked with the basic socialisation of their children before they are taken over by religious and educational institutions. An effort must be made to educate children in schools to respect their parents and encourage parents to speak their own languages to their children without the fear that they are retarding the education of their children.

*Political Parties and Interest Groups:*

Currently political parties are not seriously engaged in the task of nation building and are more concerned with scoring points and undermining one another. It is felt that political parties and interest/pressure groups should shoulder some of the responsibility for creating a race-conscious nation whose interests are more united than the legitimate sectoral interests of political parties. This is very important in the climate where many white people and white-based parties are in denial of their own racism or the existence of racism in the country.

*Reconciliation and Nation-building: Towards a Common South African Vision:*

Religion, language and the self-expression of minority groups in the country are all necessary instruments with which South Africans can achieve a truly reconciled



nation based on the same vision of One Nation founded upon the values of tolerance and common prosperity.

*National Movement Against Racism and Discrimination:*

The whole Conference resolved that there was a need to create a national movement that would spearhead and sustain a campaign against all forms of racism and discrimination in the country. This movement would facilitate what the National Conference on Racism had kicked off, namely a dialogue about racism and the promotion of equality.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE**

The first ‘National Conference on Racism: A Nation in Dialogue’ took place within the context of a newly elected, second, democratic government which saw its task as extending beyond the transitional phase to the implementation and delivery of the goals of the liberation struggle that ushered in the relatively peaceful transition that South Africa enjoyed. By calling for and participating in this Conference, government acknowledged and wanted to address the persistence of racism in our society. The deliberate fight against racism and its undeniable impact on the overall South Africa psyche was thereby underscored as a national priority. It was illustrated during the Conference itself that the national dialogue, as the Conference was billed, was an essential means to achieving nation building and reconciliation.

There was an overwhelming response by people who wanted to attend the Conference. In the end, over 1000 persons attended the Conference, well in excess of the 750 delegates that were initially expected to attend. Amongst those attending were a number of cabinet ministers, Members of Parliament, Provincial Premiers, representatives of organisations and sectors, conference facilitators, members of the media, and additional guests from the diplomatic community, as well as ordinary South Africans.

The event of the National Conference on Racism, the first of its kind after two democratic elections, was accompanied by high expectations on the one hand and trepidation on the other. Those with expectations are people who wanted to end racism and who saw the Conference as a mechanism by which they would recharge and recommit themselves to this task. Those with angst and trepidation saw the Conference as ‘another gathering’ of ‘these people’ who did not want to let go of a past that should be best left buried.

The enthusiasm amongst the people arriving at the Conference was reminiscent of the days of struggle when people knew that they had as much contribution to make as anyone else, that their experience and input would be as valuable as the President’s, if not more. The Conference had an ambience that reconnected people who had been separated by time, careers and new responsibilities. One felt a spirit of reassurance that one was in the right place at the right time with the right people and for the right reason.

The selected keynote speakers, each in his/her own right, lived up to the expectations of their assignments and more. Each keynote contribution was a necessary component

of the totality of the Conference. The government's support of and commitment to the Conference amplified the realisation that racism was indeed a problem to be attended to and was not a creation of the SAHRC.

The discussions both in the plenary and the breakaway groups were helpful in adding to the known truths about racism. The Conference, however, had some unavoidable problems.

First, the number of days were not adequate to address as huge a problem as racism by a conference of that size.

Second, the working groups as such had two unintended consequences, namely, in a well-intentioned spirit of democracy, participants were assigned to working groups where they may not have contributed as passionately as they would have done, had they chosen their own groups. This, however, could not be avoided, given the number of participants. The other unintended consequence and irony is that inasmuch as it was hoped and understood that more would be accomplished by small groups, it appeared as though people felt more protected in the plenary where they felt they were talking to everybody at the same time. In a small group, people felt they would be represented by someone else to the plenary, whereas speaking in the plenary they were in charge of their words and therefore had a sense of ownership of and belonging to the National Conference.

Third, in the spirit of reconciliation, people shied away from the more difficult aspects of racism and chose to remain on the subject of black-white racism. In the end, the Conference fell short on understanding, explaining and addressing the racism that exists between 'non-white' groups. People were uncomfortable in voicing as part of the discussion the uneasiness that exists with regard to the fact that democracy is about representivity and certain ethnic groups are seen to be over-represented with the Africans remaining unrepresented. In the context of the African Renaissance, more and more people are gaining an African consciousness with attendant reluctance to be spoken for. This remains a daunting task for a South Africa that is mortgaging a future that is non-racist but African-centred.

It must be mentioned that there are issues that this Conference could not address, due to the time factor and due to the choice of the conference organisers consonant with the overwhelming sentiments in the nations. These issues are in the context of ethnicity and language to the extent that ethnic and language differentiation generate the same feelings of alienation within the majority African collective.

One would be remiss if one failed to mention the fact that one of the major successes of the first National Conference on Racism was to place the discussions on racism in South Africa right in the centre of the public space and to legitimise the SAHRC as a national institution with an objective and convening role on an issue as central as the history of South Africa's race relations. Through an exercise of this nature, all South Africans can only move forward, not fragmented as before, but in organic dialogue with one another, appreciating that if they do not attend to racism collectively, they can only go down separately. The dialogue that has begun, it seems from the vibrant debates that continue to fill the pages of newspapers and the airwaves on talk shows, is a necessary catharsis for the whole South African Nation, a nation whose history has been written in colour.

## REVIEW OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE

The media reportage can be broken up into three phases. The first phase represented the initial or preparatory period during which the public became aware that the SAHRC was convening a National Conference on Racism. During this period the media was more hostile than friendly towards and sceptical of the idea of holding a conference of the proposed size and scope. By and large the media was reacting to the perception that this was a fruitless expenditure of money on a matter that should be better left to rest. The media was defensive at this time in view of the Inquiry into Racism in the Media, which left the (white) media shaken.

The media coverage was at this stage scanty, as there was no event as such to cover and on which to peg their reportage. It seemed to have been both the perception of and the creation by the media that the consultations on racism in South Africa were a deliberate orchestration of the Human Rights Commission at the behest of the ANC. *'The ANC must look at own pots before calling kettle black'*, *'ANC's double standards on 'naked' racism'*, *'Rassisme-tydbom bedreig Suid Afrika'*, *'SA politics moves closer to racial polarisation'* were typical newspaper headlines as the provincial consultations were going on.

As the provincial consultative processes moved on, however, media interest gained more momentum. Real stories were coming out of the provincial meetings to the extent that local and even national coverage was given to the meetings. At this stage, the frequency and to a lesser extent the tone of the media coverage was not as unfriendly as in the initial stages.

The second phase was the days during which the Conference took place. Over the few days of the Conference, media coverage accelerated, as the media wanted to cover the President who opened the conference and the attendance of so many public office holders.

Newspapers concentrated on the opening speech of the President and on reactions to the speech from various quarters. The media captured Mbeki's counsel to the Conference that white fears and black expectations needed to be met, and his challenge to white South Africans to recognise the reality of racism in South Africa when he urged that it did not make much sense to argue that the responsibility to end racism resided with the victims of racism. The media also captured the President's warning that, although legislation was in place to put an end to racial discrimination, laws alone were not sufficient to eradicate the rot of racism that has been in place for decades. The President added:

...what we have to deal with is white, anti-black racism, while giving no quarter to any tendency towards black racism, anti-white racism, whether actual or potential, as well as anti-semitism...At the same time, the creation of the socio-economic conditions enabling such equality to be achieved is fundamental to the realisation of that constitutional and legally guaranteed right to equality...

There were a couple of dramatic events during the conference that excited the media. For example, the powerful address by the African-American who gave a black professional woman's perspective on race relations in America got the media interested, as this was not South African "white bashing". The hard-hitting speech by

ANC Member of Parliament Dr. Pallo Jordan and the ensuing altercation with the DP's Dene Smuts was the stuff that media was made for.

In addition to the apologies from a few white South Africans, there was an equally important voice from whites such as Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio who made a passionate appeal to fellow white South Africans to come on board and build, in partnership with black and other fellow citizens, the desired New South Africa. This vital role by whites, however, could only be fulfilled once there was a reckoning with the past. The media was not as interested in such stories as the so-called 'tears stories'. The media also did not give sufficient reportage to such non-controversial but crucial exchanges and contributions from the floor.

The third phase is the post-conference period during which the media continued to write stories with either specific reference to the National Conference, or about racism, with the impact of the Conference in the background. The third phase was also characterised by an enormous public interest in race. On radio talk shows and in opinion pieces and letters to the editor, people are still talking about the Race Conference to the extent that even those who doubted the merit of the event now refer to the Conference in less harsh ways. A great success of the Racism Conference is that the op-ed pieces, being traded from all sides, are keeping the debate alive. It is as if the National Conference on Racism provided the nation with a peg on which to hang their race- or discrimination-related stories.

If what is going on in the media is anything to go by, then it is evident that the National Conference was a great success in that it created the awareness about racism that was not commonplace before, and opened the public space for the dialogue to continue. Virtually every day there is reference to race and thereby the Conference itself.

All in all the media continues to report on the Racism Conference, especially after several stories about white brutality surfaced on SABC to vindicate the Conference in general and the SAHRC in particular.

## **CONFERENCE OUTCOMES**

The Conference outcomes were captured in the '*South African Millennium Statement and Programme of Action*' adopted at the end of the Conference. The Statement reads as follows:

### **Preamble**

*Whereas* President T M Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address on the occasion of the official opening of parliament on 4 February 2000, called for a National Conference on Racism and requested the South African Human Rights Commission to convene such an event;

*Whereas* the South African Human Rights Commission convened a National Steering Committee which included the Commission on Gender Equality, South African Non-

Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO) and government representatives to guide it in the organisation of the National Conference;

*Whereas* the National Steering Committee adopted certain principles which would guide the conduct of the National Conference on Racism: that it would be truly *national and representative* of all sectors of South African society; it would be *fully participatory and interactive* in order to ensure that the views, experiences and visions of ordinary South Africans were heard. To this end comprehensive provincial public consultations and public meetings were undertaken and nation-wide public submissions and contributions solicited to inform the National Conference. Further, the National Conference would be *outcomes-oriented* in order to commit all South Africans to a common programme of action to combat racism;

*Whereas* it was resolved that the objectives of the National Conference on Racism were to promote understanding of the nature, meaning and manifestations of racism in South African society, devise a common programme for the elimination of all forms of racism and make preparations for the United Nations *3rd World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* due to be held in South Africa in August/September 2001;

*Whereas* the United Nations General Assembly has declared the year 2000 to be the International Year for the Culture of Peace and 2001 the International Year of Mobilisation against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and also proclaimed 1993-2003 the 3rd Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination;

*Whereas* South Africa is guided by the Constitution which asserts the values of “human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms” as among the highest aspirations of national life;

*Whereas* those values are more fully elaborated upon and protected in a justiciable Bill of Rights and enacted in legislation, principally among which are the *Employment Equity Act, 1998* and the *Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000*. Sections of the latter law came into effect on 1 September 2000 during the course of the National Conference on Racism;

*Whereas* South Africa developed a National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights which was duly deposited with the United Nations on 10 December 1998 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that a National Consultative Forum on Human Rights has now been established; that the National Action Plan recognises that racism is a major problem that prevents the full enjoyment of human rights, especially economic and social rights and affects the development of a culture of human rights in South Africa;

*Whereas* South Africa is a proud member of the community of nations and shares the universal abhorrence of racism as stated in international instruments such as the International Bill of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights to which it is party, and endorses the Vienna Declaration and Programme of

Action (1993), the Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the 1st OAU Ministerial Conference on Human Rights (April 1999) and other statements and resolutions of the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community (SADC);

*Noting* that reports of racial violence and persistent forms of racial discrimination continue to concern all honourable and decent-minded South Africans; that some institutions of national life do not yet fully promote the development of effective non-racialism and that structural systems do not sufficiently reflect and honour the diversity of cultures, social systems, values and ways of life as recognised in our Constitution;

*Noting* also that persistent forms of racial discrimination, particularly manifested in economic and social disparities created by colonialism and apartheid and perpetuated by negative aspects of globalisation, continue to undermine the realisation of a truly non-racial society;

*Noting further* that national efforts at reconciliation, nation-building, social development and economic prosperity as embodied in the spirit of the African Renaissance will never succeed in an environment where racism thrives; and that negative aspects of globalisation enhance the economic disparities amongst people and nations;

*Noting finally* that the task of eliminating racism is a national responsibility which must engage all sectors of society in a common effort and national resolve to combat racism and build a society that affirms and respects the dignity of all South Africans regardless of their colour, culture, religion, language, ethnicity or social origin.

***The National Conference on Racism accordingly adopts the following statement:***

## **I - INTRODUCTION**

1. The 1st National Conference on Racism was held at Sandton, Gauteng on 30 August - 2 September 2000 under the slogan, *COMBATING RACISM: A Nation in Dialogue*.
2. Over 1000 South Africans representing diverse groups from civil society, racial, linguistic and cultural groups, social and political structures of society, government at all levels and from across the length and breadth of our country, independent national institutions, statutory bodies and public enterprise institutions gathered at conference during four days of deliberations on racism. About 20 observers from Australia, Brazil, the United States of America and from Nigeria, as well as observers from international NGOs based in Europe attended the conference. In the light of the forthcoming United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance to be held in South Africa in 2001, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva was also represented.
3. The Conference was officially opened by His Excellency President TM Mbeki who noted the need to address the white fears and black expectations that have

surfaced in the wake of the democratic changes ushered in in 1994. He expressed confidence that, as a basis for national dialogue, South Africans had the wisdom, ingenuity and sensitivity to the human condition to overcome racism. Among the keynote speakers was Prof. Jakes Gerwel, Prof. Patricia J Williams of the USA and Ms Nozipho January-Bardill, who is a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

4. Three themes were adopted: *The History, Nature and Sources of Racism; The Consequences, Impact and Contemporary Forms of Racism; and Strategies to Combat Racism: The Way Forward*. Each theme was elaborated into sub-themes and working groups discussed and debated the sub-themes. The outcome of the sub-themes in the working groups has been consolidated into a report on the themes and has been presented to the Conference.
5. The mood of the conference throughout was engaging. Participants undertook the tasks of the conference with determination and singular resolve. Discussions were frank and honest, sometimes there was anger and passion but the spirit of the conference was sustained throughout. The spirit of listening, of sensitivity and tolerance, of differing views and opinions about the interpretation of history, about the understanding and experiences of racism, about action strategies to eliminate racism and about a vision for the future, prevailed throughout. The character of the conference was one of dialogue, as the slogan directed. Critical to any strategy for dealing with racism, it was widely agreed, was the need to acknowledge the damage done by *apartheid*, to recognise the effects of that past on contemporary social arrangements and the reality of ongoing racism, direct and indirect, formal and informal, structural or institutional, in South African society.

## II - PRINCIPLES

6. Conference affirms that the practice of racism is both anti-human and constitutes a gross violation of human rights. Racism mutates and re-invents itself according to the prevailing social and historical circumstances. It manifests itself in complex ways, affecting the psychological, social and cultural spheres of life.
7. Conference affirms that all who live here as citizens are, in equal measure, South Africans, with equal responsibility to give content and expression to the founding principles of nationhood as contained in our Constitution. Conference therefore resolves that the task before us is to give effect to the principles and values enshrined in our founding documents and reflected in our history and in the progress towards a just, democratic and equal society.
8. Conference is committed to support all efforts to eliminate racism and gender-related discrimination in our society. Conference believes that racism often manifests itself in the discrimination against women so prevalent in South African society.
9. Conference recognises that the establishment of a society free of racism will contribute to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable human development.

10. Conference acknowledges that economic policies of the past have served to marginalise rural people and their communities and have thus created a reservoir of poverty which has become a contemporary manifestation of racism.
11. Conference recognises the social exclusion and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities. This is to be found in social support systems, institutionally-based care and educational facilities. Furthermore, this exclusion is often compounded by racism. Racism continues to manifest itself amongst disabled people due to past apartheid policies.
12. Conference believes that xenophobia may, in certain circumstances, be a manifestation of racism.
13. Conference recognises that with the advent of the new democracy South Africa has had to assume its responsibilities among the community of nations. Among these is the duty and responsibility to provide sanctuary for and express solidarity with the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. Their presence in our country has led to unacceptable levels of xenophobia and intolerance in our communities. Public institutions have a duty to ensure that xenophobia is not tolerated in the implementation of policies, particularly those relating to immigration and crime prevention.
14. Conference endorses the need for affirmative action and corrective measures to promote the achievement of substantive equality and to address the continuing effects of past discrimination and disadvantage.
15. Conference accordingly affirms that the foundation of a society free of racism is the practice of tolerance as a virtue which may be adopted as a way of life as set out in the UNESCO *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* (1995). Tolerance, according to the Declaration, is born out of respect for difference and is not threatened by cultural or any other diversity and upholds human rights, democracy and the rule of law as the birthright of all humanity. Tolerance implies accepting that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour, and values are, nonetheless, equal in dignity and worth.

*Conference therefore adopts the following Programme of Action:*

### **III - PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

16. That government and parliament are hereby petitioned to declare the period 2001-2010 as the Decade for National Mobilisation against Racism;
17. That 16 December 2000, National Day of Reconciliation, be devoted to activities to promote reconciliation among all the people of South Africa.
18. That SANGOCO and other agents of civil society are urged to establish and spearhead a national anti-racism forum which will develop into a movement against racism at all levels of society;



19. That during this International Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), anti-racism education and training be provided in all educational institutions, especially at primary and secondary school levels; that anti-racism training be made available to public service officials and other service providers, such as professionals, business, hospitality as well as leisure and entertainment industries, who interact with the public in the course of their duties;
20. That government should speedily address the question of provision of reparations for victims of racism as recommended by the TRC Report (1998). The issue, however, should be considered holistically taking account of appropriate intervention measures to redress the effects of apartheid.
21. That policies and measures aimed at reducing the disparities in wealth, including land and tenure reform, access to capital, skills and training, be implemented;
22. That, at international level, the question of compensation for the nations and peoples who have suffered as a result of slavery, imperialism and colonialism over many centuries, be considered. This matter, however, should be considered together with the need to make adjustments to the world economic order and to address the problem of extreme poverty, particularly in Africa.
23. That inasmuch as the twin evils of racism and patriarchy define social inequality in South Africa on the basis of race and gender, and where the unevenly distributed power relations have resulted in violence against women and children, it is imperative that any strategy against racism must seek to address gender inequality with the same vigour.
24. That the programme of “National Dialogue to Combat Racism” which characterised this National Conference be extended and intensified so as to engage all sectors of society.
25. That government should take immediate steps to ratify outstanding international human rights instruments like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights as well as the Statute of Rome on the International Criminal Court.
26. That measures be adopted which would restore and enhance the usage and recognition of diverse cultures, languages and religions extant in our country and that steps to establish the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities, be speeded up.
27. That research be undertaken to find ways of effectively promoting and deepening respect for traditional lore and cultures of all the people of our country with a view to ensuring respect and understanding for their search for identity, respect for their cultures and values so that a common nationhood may be forged out of difference and diversity.

28. That transformation in the administration of justice system be accelerated so as to ensure better representivity in the police, the prosecutorial service and the judiciary so that they may better reflect the diversity of cultures and world-views represented in our society, ensure rule by consent, engender popular participation in the justice system and implement measures to provide support for victims of crimes motivated by racism.
29. That with the promulgation of the *Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000* the criminal justice system be equipped to enforce provisions to prevent and punish racist offences and that officials in the justice system be trained in race sensitivity and racism awareness.
30. That appropriate social assistance for asylum-seekers and refugees be considered in cooperation with NGOs which would help with their integration into South African society and increase their contribution in skills and expertise towards national development. Conference calls for the development of closer cooperation between government and the National Consortium on Refugee Affairs and the UNHCR in order to coordinate and improve service to asylum seekers and refugees.

#### IV

31. To give effect to the above measures, Conference recommends that the South African Human Rights Commission should develop and adopt a comprehensive national action plan and strategy to combat racism. Such a plan should include, amongst other things, indicators of success, timeframes and responsibilities, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems.
32. All South Africans are urged to give maximum support to the *Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* to be held in South Africa in 2001, to be involved in all preparatory activities and participate fully in all events to mark this international endeavour.

#### Postamble

As a nation we stand at the threshold of the African Century. This century beckons us towards exciting new possibilities. Outstanding achievements lie in wait for our nation and our Continent. We believe that during this era of the African Renaissance much rests on our shoulders to create a better tomorrow for ourselves and for future generations. Racism negates our collective aspirations and is a counterforce to our common vision.

As a nation we can do no better than pledge our allegiance in the words of the motto on our national coat of arms: *!KE E !XARRA !!KE*. This ancient wisdom from one of the aboriginal communities of our land will inspire and guide us like a lodestar that illumines our path. The pledge we make today is that no South African shall ever again be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content and quality of their character.

Sandton, Gauteng,  
2 September 2000

As an important symbolic gesture, after its adoption the South African Millennium Statement was signed in endorsement by representatives of key South African organisations. Signatories were: Deputy President Jacob Zuma, Njongonkulu Ndungane - the Archbishop of Cape Town, Dr Tinus Schutte - Office of the Public Protector, Chief Patekile Holomisa - President of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), Dr Faizel Randera - Inspector-General Intelligence Services, Ms Joyce Piliso-Seroke - Chairperson of the Commission on Gender Equality, Dr Brigalia Bam - Chairperson Independent Electoral Commission, and Ms Marcia Andrews - SANGOCO.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

By the time the Conference was drawing to a close, there was an overwhelming feeling that something had to be done. What was not too clear was what must be done, by whom, when and in partnership with whom. The size of the Conference and the emotive nature of the subject matter meant that there was more agreement on what the participants were against than what they were for. Be that as it may, the debate and the inputs throughout the Conference spurred people on to want to move forward.

Both President Mbeki and Deputy President Zuma invoked the question: “What shall we do to end the nightmare [of racism]?” In answer to this vexing question, the Conference resolved, first of all, to sustain the national dialogue on race relations. Many present felt that the Government needed to act with more decisiveness in implementing the constitutional guidelines and legislated anti-racism and anti-discrimination frameworks. Specific reference was made to Chapter 9 institutions with a mandate to ensure that racist and discriminatory practices were something of the past. Participants acknowledged that old habits die hard and a concerted effort, therefore, was needed to build a non-racist and non-sexist society in South Africa. Both the tenseness and the freedom with which people articulated their views on the state of racism in a free South Africa sign-posted the road ahead and that, in order to deal with racism, the road will be hazardous and will have casualties.

The process of transformation, much as it was making headway, would remain frustrated as long as decision-making personnel in institutions that need transformation remain fossilised in the attitudes of yesteryears. For instance, the transformation of the civil service will continue to present problems as long as the white managers are retained for the sake of having been there before or when they are resistant to the new ethos of anti-racism and non-discrimination. Towards this end, there was consensus that the training of judges, magistrates and other officials in the prosecutorial services is vital.

The introduction of Equality Courts is a welcome addition to the existing constitutional jurisprudence, but their effectiveness will be limited if no intervention is made at the level of conscientisation of decision-makers.

There was also the identification of the need for a racism audit in addition to the SAHRC’s constitutional powers to ask for information from institutions on their progress towards their compliance with human rights standards. As an example, the

SAHRC could be empowered to monitor compliance of the Employment Equity Bill and related legislation.

Institutions in civil society such as churches, labour movements, community-based organisations and NGOs, need to be incentivised to partner with the government in the project of nation building. This should entail, among others, a deliberate, goal-oriented and focussed synchronisation of goodwill, resources and activities that would undergird state-civil society synergy. This is crucial to depoliticise South Africa and take the country out of the historical state-civil society struggle.

The role of educational institutions, churches and other agents of change cannot be overemphasised in the national effort to create a culture of tolerance and mutual respect across the racial divide. In this context, the call for making compulsory at least one African language in all South African schools was hailed as a step in the right direction. Religious organisations have both direct access to and influence on the extent to which people define themselves, and in relation to others. A strategic and organic partnership between religious leaders and policy makers would assist in the inculcation of the values such as respect, human dignity, honour, tolerance, diversity, honesty and equality that South Africans have identified as paramount in their lives.

The role of culture and the arts in the elaboration of a new and human rights based culture in South Africa should be re-visited and re-directed in a concerted and well co-ordinated effort towards the creation of a society that derives strength from diversity and that sees itself as truly South African.

Political parties, from the ruling party to the smallest opposition formations, ought to do more work on combating racism and promoting national reconciliation and not wait for election time and to pay lip service to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Political organisations should also respect the ethos of One South Africa in their own leadership structures and membership.

It was felt that it is important for South Africans to identify themselves with the African continent and the people of Africa, not only in the economic sense, but also, and more importantly, in the realm of human relations and sustainable development. South Africa can neither be a Western country nor develop without working in collaboration with and being integral to the rest of the African Family. In this context, the level of xenophobia and Afro-phobia (fear of Africans) prevalent in South Africa, and especially among black South Africans, must be combated.

In its Programme of Action, the Conference resolved that 16 December 2000 be devoted to activities to promote reconciliation amongst the people of South Africa. The Conference resolved to urge SANGOCO and civil society to develop a national anti-racism forum to act against racism at all levels of society. The Conference further urged Government to make good on the promises to pay reparation to victims of racism as recommended by the TRC Report in 1998.

The Conference issued a South African Millennium Statement wherein the Conference pledged to fight racism and all forms of discrimination and resolved to ask the Government and Parliament to declare the ten years from 2001 - 2010 as the Decade for the National Mobilisation against Racism.

## **APPENDIX 1 FULL TEXT OF SPEECHES REFERRED TO**

Hon President Thabo M Mbeki  
Dr N Barney Pityana  
Professor Jakes Gerwel  
Professor Patricia J Williams  
Hon Dr Pallo Jordan  
Ms Nozipho January-Bardill  
Hon Professor Kader Asmal  
Ms Antjie Krog  
Hon Deputy President Jacob G Zuma

### **SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA, THABO MBEKI, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RACISM, Johannesburg, Wednesday 30 August 2000**

Chairperson,  
Distinguished delegates:

On behalf of our Government, I am happy to welcome you all to this important Conference and to wish you success in your deliberations.

I would also like to thank Dr Barney Pityana and the rest of the Human Rights Commission, most sincerely, for the work they have done, first of all to ensure that this Conference is held and that it becomes the success it surely will be.

The public discussion that has taken place in our country in the last few months on the issue of racism, demonstrates the point unequivocally that, in this area, we are faced with one of the most contentious issues on our national agenda.

Its discussion does not lead to the national feel-good atmosphere we all experience whenever our national sports teams score a victory over a foreign competitor or when other benign events occur that help us to forget the persisting racial divisions in our society.

Arguments are advanced honestly that such a discussion, about racism, can only lead to the division of our country into mutually antagonistic racial camps.

It is also said that it might very well encourage racial conflict, destroying the progress we have achieved towards national reconciliation, towards the birth of a happy rainbow nation.

It has been argued that those who point to the persistence of racism in our country are themselves racist. Those who propagate affirmative action are accused of seeking to introduce reverse racism, or, more directly, of resort to anti-white racism.

Some assert that the description 'racist' is merely an epithet used by bad people to insult others, as well as a means of intimidating and silencing those who hold views critical of the government.

Alternatively, it is said that the issue of racism is brought up by unscrupulous politicians, in an effort to mobilise black constituencies to support them. After all, so it is said, we ended apartheid and therefore racism, when we became a non-racial democracy in 1994.

On the other hand, others within our society argue that those who are most vocal in seeking to suppress discussion of this issue are those who benefited from centuries of colonial and apartheid racial domination.

These will go on to say that the privileged do not want this discussion because they want to maintain their privileged positions at all costs.

It is also said that in order to achieve this result, the privileged work hard to convince both themselves as well as the rest of society, that what is being complained of does not, in fact, exist, except for isolated incidents.

This is categorised as the denial mode, in terms of which the dominant instruments of propaganda, which, by definition, are at the disposal of the privileged, are used to obstruct recognition of reality.

The aggrieved will go further to argue that the privileged sectors of our society, accustomed to setting the national agenda, continue in the effort to set the national agenda, regardless of what the majority of our citizens might desire.

Of course, by this time, the latter have been empowered by the establishment of the democratic system to believe that they have the democratic right, openly and legitimately, to set this national agenda.

The point is also made that our process of national reconciliation has been somewhat of a charade. In this regard, it is said that only the victims of racism have responded to the call to forgive and to let bygones be bygones.

The charge is made that the perpetrators and beneficiaries of racial oppression and exploitation have acted merely to defend their interests, refusing to extend their own hand towards the victim, in a true spirit of reconciliation.

Among others, the response of certain sectors of our society to the request to them to make submissions to the TRC helped to reinforce the view that the beneficiaries of white minority rule were unwilling to contribute to the process of national reconciliation.

The same can be said of the initial response of sections of the media to the decision of the Human Rights Commission to hold hearings on the issue of racism in the media.

It is of course obvious to all participants at this Conference that colour and race would, essentially, define the two schools of thought represented in the remarks I have just made.

Necessarily, this adds to the acrimony, the unpleasantness and, therefore, the difficulty of conducting a rational and even-tempered discussion on the question of racism.

With all these problems, some might legitimately pose the question - why not abandon this discussion until some later date, when we can discuss all these matters in a more propitious atmosphere!

The Government is firmly of the view that this would be a very serious mistake.

The postponement of this discussion would sharply exacerbate the danger of the social instability implicit in the racial divisions that continue to characterise our society.

Nevertheless, as we enter into discussion, it is clear that all of us will have to make a supreme effort to allow all points of view to be heard and discussed in an atmosphere that permits the free exchange of views.

As we begin to engage one another at this Conference, I would like to believe that there are some basic propositions on which we would all agree. Let me state some of these.

First: the practice of racism is both anti-human and constitutes a gross violation of human rights.

Second: as it has been practised through the centuries, the black people have been the victims of racism rather than the perpetrators.

Accordingly, what we have to deal with is white, anti-black racism, while giving no quarter to any tendency towards black, anti-white racism, whether actual or potential, as well as anti-Semitism.

Third: racism is manifested in a variety of ways, these being the ideological, existing in the world of ideas, and the socio-economic, describing the social, political, economic and cultural power relations of domination of and discrimination against the victims of racism.

Fourth: for many centuries racism has been a fundamental defining feature of the relations between black and white, a directive principle informing the structuring of these relations.

Fifth: the legacy of racism is so deeply entrenched that no country anywhere in the world has succeeded in creating a non-racial society.

Indeed, a deeply disturbing resurgence of racism and xenophobia constitutes part of the current social and political reality in some of the developed countries of the North.

These countries pride themselves, perhaps justifiably, as the home and repository of the ideas and practice of human rights, democracy, equality and human solidarity, and leaders whose example we should emulate.

Sixth: global experience, stretching over a long period of time, demonstrates that the creation of a constitutional and legal framework for the suppression of racism is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to end this violation of human rights.

Accordingly, a constitutional and legally guaranteed right to equality and non-discrimination is very important in the fight against racism. Similarly, the legal possibility and right to redress in case of such discrimination is also critical.

At the same time, the creation of the socio-economic conditions enabling such equality to be achieved is fundamental to the realisation of that constitutional and legally guaranteed right to equality.

The American scholar Alan David Freeman has written that:

“The concept of ‘racial discrimination’ may be approached from the perspective of either its victim or its perpetrator. From the victim’s perspective, racial discrimination describes those conditions of actual social existence as a member of a perpetual underclass. This perspective includes both the objective conditions of life (lack of jobs, lack of money, lack of housing) and the consciousness associated with those objective conditions (lack of choice and lack of human individuality) in being forever perceived as a member of a group rather than as an individual.”

“The perpetrator perspective sees racial discrimination not as conditions but as actions, or series of actions, inflicted on the victim by the perpetrator. The focus is more on what particular perpetrators have done or are doing to some victims than on the overall life situation of the victim class.”

*(Legitimising racial discrimination through anti-discrimination law: A critical review of Supreme Court doctrine).*

Whatever else we may disagree about, I would hope that, at least, we would agree about these propositions.

Let me address our own situation more directly. Once more, I would hope that we would agree on most, if not all, the observations I will make.

Racism has been a fundamental organising principle in the relations between black and white in our country, ever since Dutch immigrants settled at the Cape of Good Hope.

As the dominant group in our country, the white minority worked to structure all aspects of our national life consistent with the objective that the whites should always remain the dominant group and the black majority the dominated.



Throughout this period of over three hundred years, this work, focused on the deliberate construction of a racially divided society, was done explicitly on the basis of a racist ideology, legitimised by its open and consistent adoption as official state policy.

The destruction of the Nazi and Fascist regimes in the world was one of the principal outcomes of the Second World War.

The apartheid system constituted a latter-day manifestation of the crime against humanity that Nazism and Fascism had imposed on the European, Asian and wider world, more than a decade earlier.

Accordingly, as a country, bearing in mind the post-war process of de-colonisation and the advances achieved as a result of the civil rights struggle in the United States, we became the epicentre of the state-approved ideas of racism, to which all humanity could legitimately attribute such anti-human phenomena as racism and anti-Semitism, slavery and colonialism.

Our own specific history has created a situation that constitutes a common legacy and challenge.

The social and economic structure of our society is such that the distribution of wealth, income, poverty, disease, land, skills, occupations, intellectual resources and opportunities for personal advancement, as well as the patterns of human settlement, are determined by the criteria of race and colour.

An important part of this legacy is that the imposition of the ideology of the dominant group has led to the weakening of the self-respect, pride and sense of identity of the dominated.

This results in the incidence among some of the dominated of self-hate, denial of identity and a tendency towards subservience to a definition of themselves as would have been decided by the dominant power.

Clearly, it will take time for us to wipe out this legacy.

The struggle waged by the black majority against colonialism and apartheid, supported by some principled white compatriots and the rest of the world, has, in the first instance, been aimed at ending the relationship of dominant-and-dominated, as between white and black, and achieving equality among all South Africans, in all spheres of human life and activity.

However, the incorporation in our Constitution and national statutes of the objective of the creation of a non-racial South Africa has placed an obligation on our society as a whole to strive to achieve this outcome, as an agreed national task that transcends all narrow partisan interests.

Our constitutional and legal framework and regime provide us with a strong legal base to confront the scourge of racism. That base includes:

- Our Constitution;
- International law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- Domestic legislation such as the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination as well as the Employment Equity Acts; and,
- Our jurisprudence, as represented, for instance, by the Constitutional Court decision in the City Council of Pretoria v Walker matter.

Our transition to a non-racial democracy in 1994 and the subsequent creation of the constitutional and legal framework we have just described, have not ended the inherited racist, discriminatory and inequitable divisions of our country and people.

Despite our collective intentions, racism continues to be our common bedfellow. All of us are therefore faced with the challenge to translate the dream of a non-racial society into a reality.

Fortunately for all of us, we have the advantage that the overwhelming majority of our citizens, whether we are white or black, or black or white, we are South African and African.

Almost all of us do not have the option to uproot ourselves, to resettle ourselves and our families in other, wealthier countries, happy to assume another nationality and proud to denounce our former homeland, South Africa, and continent, Africa, for their failures and brutalities.

Whatever the negatives we feel ourselves to be subject to, most of us take the view that we should address such negatives, rather than respond to them by packing our belongings and leaving.

Those of us who do not leave stay because we take the decision to fight for the emergence of a society that would enable us and our children to lead secure, comfortable and happy lives.

In a sense, this constitutes a prayer to the future. It also represents a confident confirmation of our conviction that we are capable and willing to participate in determining what that future will be.

Accordingly, what happens to South Africa, as a result of policies and practices originating from the government and other decision-makers in our society, is of direct concern to all our citizens.

This includes the most lowly and those most marginalised from the centres of social power, regardless of race, colour, gender, age and geographic location.

Consequently, what you will decide at this Conference is of the most fundamental importance to the millions of South Africans whose interests all of us in this hall claim to represent and speak for.

I will therefore make bold to advise - please bear in mind that we are a multi-racial and multi-cultural society, born out of and conditioned by policies and practices that sought to emphasise our differences as these racial and cultural groups, rather than our commonalities as human beings who have lived together for many long years.

We must also recognise this, that all of us are products of what the intellectuals have described as a process of socialisation.

Accordingly, all of us are even conditioned to understand South Africa, our common home, in different ways.

Even at this Conference, the apparently simple question - how would you characterise present-day South Africa? - will produce responses as varied as the colours of the rainbow.

As we try to determine what is best for us as a people, our intelligentsia will have to consider a wide variety of important matters. These include:

- The interconnections between the abstract and the empirical, between the ideal and the actual;
- social organisation, scientific inquiry and the impact of property relations on the integrity of the process of the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge; and,
- Empirical evidence that we are actually succeeding, or not, in ending the disparities that define some as the racially dominant and others as the racially dominated.

As I have said, hopefully all of us present here can find it within our possibility to agree also with these assertions about our own specific reality.

Needless to say, we are also perfectly at liberty to disagree with any and all of them.

Such an honest response is surely an inevitable and necessary part of the kind of discussion we need, that will enable us, collectively, to confront the challenge of racism.

All of us at this important Conference will have to answer the question - how do we respond to all the general and specific propositions we have presented to you, thus far!

This might very well include the response that all we have said constitutes the most unadulterated rubbish that you have ever had the pain to listen to.

Naturally, the delegates are perfectly entitled to arrive at this conclusion, having rationally argued that this is the only rational conclusion that any reasonable person would reach.

Having heard the charges that the government acts in a manner that seeks to intimidate those who differ with it, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all our people to break through the barrier of fear and to speak their minds.

At the same time, they must understand that true intellectual discourse presumes the vigorous contention of ideas.

By this we refer to the concept put forward at some time in the history of China when, for better or for worse, the political establishment advanced the slogan - let a hundred flowers bloom! let a hundred schools of thought contend!

Given the difficult solutions we have to find to the hundreds of problems that confront all of us, with none of us occupying a privileged position of being the exclusive domicile of wisdom, we cannot but agree that, in our instance as well, let a hundred schools of thought contend!

We speak here of a contention of ideas and not the reduction of ideas to persons, such that intellectual debate is reduced to skirmishes, battles and a war among individuals, however much any idea might be identified with a particular individual.

I make these observations because I believe that as we discuss among ourselves at this Conference, it will be important that we do not transform our rejection of any views that might be expressed into hostility towards the individuals who might express such views.

Whatever our protestations and our elevated views of ourselves, many of us are still immersed in a learning process of how to handle open and vigorous debate.

I would now like to request your indulgence to state what our Government believes that we, as South Africans, can and should do to respond to the common challenge of racism.

One of the critical national and international challenges that confront us as a country and a people, is to succeed in the objective of creating a truly non-racial society.

Many across the globe believe, with good reason, that because of our specific history, we have the possibility and will make an important contribution to the universal struggle to defeat the scourge of racism.

Whatever the problems we face today, our Government is convinced that, as a people, we have the capacity to achieve this historic and epoch-making objective.

We are convinced that as a people, both black and white, we have the wisdom, ingenuity and sensitivity to the human condition that will drive and enable us to overcome the demon of racism.

Correctly, much has been made by people around the world about the 'miracle' of our transition from apartheid rule to a non-racial society.

At the heart of the sense of wonder and relief among the international community was the fact that, contrary to many expectations, we avoided a racial war, despite the racial brutality of the apartheid system and the racial antagonisms it generated.

The international community responded with a similar sense of wonder and admiration at the formation of, and the work done, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reinforced by the morality and humanism of that outstanding son of our people, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Unfortunately, we have not done the necessary work to assess what it was that made it possible for the miracle to happen, being seemingly content merely to bask in the universal praise.

But this we all know, that what we achieved was the product of conscious and purposive human efforts and the outcome of the understanding by the millions of our people that all of us, regardless of race and colour, are interdependent members of a common neighbourhood.

It was the result of the effort expended over many years to entrench the understanding among the millions of our people that black domination was as evil as white domination.

I am convinced that precisely because we can rely on the same factors that made our peaceful transition possible, we can say, with confidence, that we will, indeed, defeat the demon of racism.

The first step we must take towards the realisation of this goal is the common recognition by all of us, black and white, that racism exists and that it is indeed a very serious problem, without whose solution it is idle to speak of a new South Africa.

Secondly, we must abandon any notion that the problem of racism has nothing to do with me and is the responsibility of another. We have to treat racism as a problem that challenges the black people. We must treat racism as a problem that challenges white people.

It is obvious that it makes no sense whatsoever to argue that the responsibility to end racism resides with the victims of racism.

Another step we have to take is to make the common determination that, precisely because this issue is so fundamental to our future, we have to ensure that it is discussed frankly, freely and openly. We must be ready to take the pain that will be an inevitable part of this open discourse.

None among us should seek to suppress this discussion. To suppress it is to guarantee the perpetuation of racism, with the destructive consequences of which all of us must surely be aware.

These requirements place a particular obligation on the white section of our population itself voluntarily to recognise the reality of racism, not to propitiate any sense of guilt, but to make a contribution to the bright future of our country which they legitimately expect.

It is not possible to over-emphasise this particular imperative, so central is its place among the panoply of initiatives we must take in the common struggle to end racism.

We will never succeed in the struggle against racism if the white section of our population does not join with its black fellow-citizens in common effort to transform ours into a non-racial society.

Naturally, I am aware of the justified feeling among many of our white compatriots that they were not responsible for racism and apartheid.

Accordingly, they argue that they feel insulted when the crimes of the apartheid system are blamed on them.

From this, it becomes an easy step to take to the conclusion that these compatriots have no particular obligation to heal a wound they did not cause.

Correct as this argument may be, nevertheless we have to respond to the actual situation that faces us in this country.

This actual situation is that racism organised our society in such a manner that the black oppressed could not possibly have a way of distinguishing between those who elected to enforce a racist system, and those who were the involuntary beneficiaries of racism.

Explained in other words, racism constitutes the practice of uniting people on the basis of race, even by statute, as in our case, and presenting them as a united entity relative to those who are the victims of racism. It is to such a united entity that the victims of racism must necessarily respond.

In this context, we must also recognise the fact that throughout a very long period of struggle against racism, very few of our white compatriots broke ranks with the system of white minority rule to join the black millions who were in rebellion against racist rule.

In this situation, it becomes easy to argue that - you may not have been against us, which we only know from what you say, but you were not with us, which we know because you were not with us in struggle!

It serves little purpose to take offence at a perceived attribution of guilt and therefore to decide to take no responsibility to help solve the challenges our country faces. In reality, such a position only serves to make it more difficult to end racism in our society.

If I may I would like to refer briefly to what the distinguished President of our Constitutional Court, Justice Arthur Chaskalson, said last year when he addressed the Congress of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

He says that by the time he entered the legal profession, discrimination and humiliation of Jews in South Africa because of their religion "had ceased to be a significant factor in our lives." He continues:

“ Then, the dominant defining characteristic of our family, within the broader context of South African society, was not our ethnic or religious origins, but the fact that we were white. Because of that, we were entitled to all the benefits then accorded by law to people who were white. We prospered, as so many of the Jewish community did, not only because of our work, but also because of the opportunities offered to us as whites. We were no longer part of a marginalised group within society; we had become part of a privileged group, and part of a society in which others were subjected on a daily basis to the discrimination and humiliation which had been the lot of so many of our ancestors.”

As we engage the challenge of racism, it is also clear that we have to address the seemingly two-sided phenomenon of ‘white fears and black expectations’.

Many within white society harbour fears that our country will slide into the abyss, if it has not already begun that slide. They fear that they will be the worst and perhaps the express victims of the impending catastrophe.

In her book, *Country of My Skull*, Antjie Krog says that General Constand Viljoen told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

“ The Afrikaner can in no way detach himself from the past. But we must be allowed to make for ourselves an honourable role in the new dispensation. The Afrikaner feels disempowered, unsafe, his language is threatened, his educational structures are in pieces - in short, the Afrikaner feels flooded by the majority and he has nowhere to turn.”

In this situation, the many negative things that do happen in our country, as they do in any other, are easily read as confirmation that the expected dismal future is on its way.

It is in this context that even the discussion of racism, aimed at ending racism, itself generates the fear that it will provoke black violence against our white citizens.

Out of all this comes the advice - move gently with your transformation processes lest you worsen white fears about the future!

For their part, the black people watch and wait in expectation that real change will come sooner rather than later.

They, too, are fearful that sensitivity to the reality of white fears might translate into insensitivity about their expectations speedily to end the pain they have endured for centuries.

If white South Africa is fearful of the future because of what it might lose, black South Africa looks forward to the future because of what it will gain.

In the end, what it expects it will gain is, fully, its human dignity, based on an end to poverty, ignorance and inequality, and based on the creation of a society in which its blackness will no longer be a badge of subservience.

Out of all this comes the advice - move speedily with our transformation processes lest we lose confidence in everything that has been said about, democracy, non-racialism and national reconciliation!

Peter Rule, with Marilyn Aitken and Jenny van Dyk, has written a biography of Mrs Nokukhanya Luthuli, the wife of Chief A.J. Luthuli, entitled *Nokukhanya: Mother of Light*. At the age of 90 years, they quote her expressing this simple but profoundly humanist and African wish:

“My wish before I die, is to see blacks and whites living harmoniously in a united South Africa.”

To answer her prayer, we have no choice but to act together to address both the fears and the expectations, without allowing that these fears are used to perpetuate racism, without allowing that the justified expectations are addressed in a manner that will create new crises.

The very act of getting together in pursuit of a common cause would both reduce the fears and remove any confrontational attitude attaching to the expectations.

It would surely confer a universal benefit if those who might despise and fear others because of their race, our history and its legacy, no longer had cause to do so; while those who might carry anger in their hearts against others because of their race, our history and its legacy, also no longer had cause to do so.

Thus shall we have a future of hope for the black and white children of our country, to whom we must bequeath an adulthood as free of hate and fear as they were free of hate and fear when they were born.

In the speech I have already cited, Judge Arthur Chaskalson says that what is demanded of all South Africans is:

“That we commit ourselves completely and wholeheartedly to the transformation that has to take place. This calls for more than pious statements or resolutions at the end of a conference...(It means) seeking solutions and not recrimination. Pragmatically (as the Jewish people) this is what we have to do; ethically, this is what we are obliged to do, and in good conscience we can do no less.”

In 1967, a group of experts convened by UNESCO issued a “Statement on race and racial prejudice”;. The statement begins with these words:

“All (human beings) are born free and equal both in dignity and in rights. This universally proclaimed democratic principle stands in jeopardy wherever political, economic, social and cultural inequalities affect human group relations. A particularly striking obstacle to the recognition of equal dignity for all is racism. Racism continues to haunt the world.”

That world includes our own country.



You have convened here, distinguished South Africans and valued foreign guests, to help our country answer the question - what shall we do to end the nightmare!

This urgent question deserves an urgent answer.

Thank you.

*Issued by the Presidency, 30 August 2000*

## **REINVENTING HISTORY FOR A NEW HUMANITY: CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGE OF RACISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**Opening Address: 1st National Conference on Racism, Johannesburg  
Wednesday 30 August 2000  
Dr N Barney Pitso**

Greetings! I have the honour to welcome you all to this First National Conference on Racism in South Africa. This is the first ever event of this nature and magnitude. I often refer to other epoch-making events in the history of our country like the National Convention that ushered in the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955 which gave birth to the Freedom Charter. I guess historians can point to other events of national significance like the March of Women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. None, I believe, could ever reach the scope and breadth of vision of this National Conference. It is a privilege and honour therefore for my colleagues on the Steering Committee and the South African Human Rights Commission to have been entrusted by the President with this task. The National Conference, as you know, has been in the making since the President announced it in his State of the Nation Address to mark the Official Opening of Parliament on 4 February 2000. And yet this gathering has been necessary as part of the building blocks towards the new South Africa from the time the Interim Constitution was adopted. In other words this Conference is but one of the many processes in the social and constitutional evolution of our country. The outcomes of this Conference, I believe, will be of as far-reaching significance for the social development of our country as any of the previous events that I referred to.

And yet it has taken us so long to come to this point. In part this was understandable. Building a nation is a painstaking business. Doing so out of the crucible of the policies of not just segregation but of racial oppression needs one to summon reserves of strength and vitality, of trust that many might have thought never existed in this country. But they do. It meant that some leaders had to cross the rubicon which more timid souls would have balked at the prospect of and taken refuge in the security of temporal power. It meant that many spent sleepless nights crafting our founding documents to create a constitutional dispensation we have all become so proud of and for which we as a nation are lauded the world over. It meant that a President should expend his energies symbolising reconciliation and a man of God pointing us always to the symbol of the rainbow. We are a nation that has been graced by so much. Having crossed one mountain on our journey, having overcome yet another obstacle, another is looming in the horizon. And that is how it often feels.

Today we confront the toughest task. We are confronting the demon of racism. We are saying that a nation that has journeyed so far cannot let go of the prize that awaits us nor can we undo what has been achieved. And yet what has been achieved is tarnished by the continuing prevalence of racism in our midst. It is the nature of South African society that we are a people that draws from different historical and cultural inspirations. We speak different languages, we worship God differently and our cultural make-up is diverse and as distinct as the stars that shine in the galaxy. And yet we occupy a universe of values and humanity that we all share. So often, however, that universe of difference has been used to attach value and significance out of proportion to reality and to use power to exclude others and devalue them as a means of upholding supremacy and privilege for some at the expense of others. This has been the means of excluding and under-privileging the putative "Other". That is what it is about and that is what it has been in South Africa between black and white peoples from the first landing of European settlers on our shores.

This structural organisation of our society has continued into the present dispensation. The race stratification of South African society continues to be the norm. The structures which history has erected, the mindsets and social practices are not changing fast enough to meet the pace of time. The racial attitudes are not sufficiently challenged by our new legal system and the legal norms are not reaching far enough to stem the continuation of some of these practices. I challenge you to read any newspaper in our country today. You would no doubt notice the prevalence of racial violence, the abuse of power, the acts of discrimination in our society. You will notice that despite the constitution and the laws that we have passed since 1994 the invisibility of black people in large segments of our national life continues. To make it worse we are being persuaded that that is the norm. That this is as it should be and that this is the only way it can become.

We are being persuaded that here in Africa there is a certain logic and merit to having our national sports teams being composed totally or predominantly of white people, that our eminent researchers and scientists, our business people; our schools and churches are segregated because the logic of time dictates it to be so. We cannot have it as ordinary and to be expected that the impression continues to be created that poverty and under-development should afflict the black people of our country disproportionately, that our justice system should continue to privilege white people in the disparities in sentencing, that the education system should continue to fail black communities so disproportionately; that the health system should fail to meet the needs of the poorest in our land where the psychiatric hospitals attract many who might have been the finest of our sons and daughters had drugs and alcohol addiction not got the better of them. We cannot have the situation where HIV/AIDS has become associated with black suffering or our prisons populated with the black poor who in any other fair and just system need never have been incarcerated for the crimes they committed.

The answer surely is not in black people refusing to take moral responsibility for their actions. It is not simply blaming it all on others. It cannot be that we should succumb to the self-fulfilling prophecy of blackness being equated with problems. It certainly cannot be the reversal of racism and racist sentiment. All forms of racism., xenophobia, racial intolerance and racist bigotry cannot be justified under any circumstances. It does not justify criminal actions against white farmers, or against

refugees, asylum seekers and random black African foreigners in our midst, nor under-performing at school or at work. Racism and xenophobia, and scapegoating are not the answers. It does not mean that the poor must be reckless about their health nor should they not strive to succeed in sport nor to excel at school. It is simply that additional challenge to endeavour, success to emulate and goodness to strive for. It is a moral challenge that we can all aspire to.

At the heart of the making of the new South Africa is undoubtedly the unmaking of some of the old. Somehow we need to learn new ways of relating to one another across racial barriers. We need to understand and appreciate the cultural differences and we must challenge many of the social and cultural orthodoxies that have gone to make the taken-for-granted life-world of an europeanised South Africa. It means re-valuing Africa and much that this Continent has to offer. It requires deftness of skill to live a fulfilled life in the new South Africa. It means that all our cultures must occupy the same plane of value and all value systems be evaluated on equal terms. It means challenging the prevailing cultural hegemonies and establishing a new set of values that many of us already share but which are rarely acknowledged. The complexities that bestow privilege as by divine right on some and which infuse inferiority upon others must be put under the spotlight. It means that we should all have that degree of understanding and sensitivity to the values that others attach to what may be to us less significant. It is hard to be the new South African. This new humanity we are talking about has a price too.

It is for that reason that I say that this Conference spans the course of history and constructs a new history for the future of our country. It is a new history not by some revisionist process, not by reinventing the past but by being subjects of our history and by making history today. We invite you to participate fully in this Conference knowing full well that this will challenge you and may make you feel uncomfortable. Enter into the spirit of this Conference at this risk that this encounter may change your life for good. Open your heart in the knowledge that you are in the presence of fellow South Africans here: listen, hear, understand, feel and empathise as the heartbeat of this nation sends waves across this land. We cannot be unmoved by the plight of those who suffer and we must not excuse and be silent before the brutality of racism in our midst. Some cynics have said that this Conference is a risk. I say failure to have a Conference like this was an even greater risk. I say that because racism is not affordable. It is destructive. We cannot afford to be indifferent to racist practices, or to be complicit in the evil of racism. None of us remain untouched in our very souls by the awareness of racism. We cannot be untouched by the pain, hurt and suffering, the wastage of resources this country cannot afford. It is not in the interests of anybody to continue the practice of racism. Racism diminishes and devalues the humanity of us all.

Besides the fact that racism diminishes our humanity, it must be stated categorically that racism threatens our constitutional basis and saps our credibility. Our very existence is at stake if our legal and constitutional system is unable to protect its citizens, does not extend opportunity equally to all. When confidence in the system is destroyed and undermined, its very existence is under threat. We must restore confidence in our legal and constitutional system. The law must speak and act alike to every South African. All of us hoped for much from the new South Africa. It cannot be that a majority-elected, democratic government can fail to uphold the values that

we all hold dear and which our constitutional system upholds. Racism is the antithesis of the constitutional values we have enshrined in our body of laws and the constitution since 1993.

I have said that cynics have said that this Conference is a risk. They also meant that an event like this can never produce results. We beg to differ. We believe that there is sufficient consensus among all South Africans about the horror of racism. All South Africans are diminished by racist practices, especially those that are committed in the name of some of us. It is for that reason that we believe that this Conference will initiate a national consensus, a movement against racism in all its forms. It is for that reason we look to the best of what South Africa can offer, across all political persuasions, across the barriers of race, colour and culture, to say that we will eradicate racism from our midst. We believe that this Conference can produce such a national resolve. But that is only the beginning. We must go further and say how we will stop racism. That is the strategic action. In that too I believe there is sufficient reason for consensus. We must simply find each other. This is what W E B du Bois said in his seminal book of essays *The Souls of Black Folk*, first published in 1903:

Again, we may decry the color-prejudice of the South, yet it remains a heavy fact. Such curious kinks of the human mind exist and must be reckoned with soberly. They cannot be laughed away, nor always successfully stormed at, nor easily abolished by act of legislature. And yet they must not be encouraged by being let alone. They must be recognised as facts, but unpleasant facts; things that stand in the way of civilisation and religion and common decency. They can be met in but one way, - by the breadth and the broadening of human reason, by catholicity of taste and culture... The guiding of thought and the deft coordination of deed is at once the path of honour and humanity (1994:56).

Two thoughts have relevance for us here: one, that racism must be acknowledged and not denied; two, that dealing with racism is a matter beyond the capacity of the law alone to stamp it out completely. What it requires is a resort to human reason, human capacity and the values we all share. That is what has brought us together here and that is what will take us out to every corner of our country as anti-racism activists.

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE “COMBATING RACISM: A NATION IN DIALOGUE”**

**Sandton, Johannesburg, Wednesday 30 August 2000  
Professor Jakes Gerwel**

Chairperson, Dr Pityana  
President, Deputy President,  
Members of Cabinet, Premiers  
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The debates, public discussions and general societal discourse - at times overt, often subterranean and sometimes merely suspected or deduced - about racism in our society should not surprise anyone even faintly acquainted with our history.

We are after all the historical products of a social and political dispensation that was very widely regarded as the most structured form of racial rule and social organisation in the last half of the twentieth century. When most of the world, even if at times more in rhetoric and intention than in actual practice, was moving towards conscious anti-racism in the wake of the Second World War and the decolonisation thrust, the political rulers of this country sought to cast in law, regulation and enforced conventions the racially based attitudes and practices that had been at the basis of so much of our history.

The Union of South Africa, the national political arrangement in which and out of whose premises apartheid grew, was a straightforward racial arrangement and the history of colonial dispossession, of which the Union was the turn of the century culmination, was nothing less than the systematic process of disempowerment and subjugation of black people by those of European origin.

For us not to have been in such debate and discussion now would have represented the surprising phenomenon.

It would have indicated either the impossibly miraculous overcoming, in the course of five years, the effects of three centuries of living together in a particular way; or a dangerous denial of key negative aspects of our social reality.

It would also, and importantly, have been an abdication of a wider responsibility that South Africans have, viz to utilise the platform of their remarkable and exemplary political transition from racial rule to a non-racial democratic order for exploring the possibilities of an enduring and profound transformation to non-racialism and an anti-racist way of living. We often lose sight of how much of an inspiration we still represent to people across the world because of the manner in which we solved our political conflict; to confront with that same forthrightness the social legacy of racism with a common commitment to overcome it, will be the more lasting contribution to a world that seeks the political-moral enthusiasm that the success of South Africa provided at the close of a tired century.

Of course, most importantly, we owe it to ourselves and our children.

The manner in which we conduct those debates, the approaches we adopt and emphases we place on the public conversation, the measure to which we entrench division rather than enhancing cross-communal co-operation: these could, and should, be critiqued and dissected. That the conversation takes place, and with robust frankness, is the unquestionable benefit to our society. It is the product and dividend of our non-racial democracy that we can now confront ourselves in this fashion, and hold together as a nation.

The overall title of the Conference, *Combating racism: a nation in dialogue*, contains clues to the approach to this national conversation. The former part, “combating racism”, points to an action-related approach, a theme to which we shall return in the course of this address. The second part, referring to ourselves as a nation in dialogue, emphasises the unity of a nation that acknowledges its diversity, differences,

divisions, tensions and conflict potential and recognises dialogue as the key manner in which to deal with the destructive potential of those social characteristics.

We cannot empirically and may not morally place racism as merely another form of expression of difference in our diverse society, ethically indistinct from other markers of difference. Its role in our history has been too crucial to the shaping of the details of the lives of the majority of people who have lived here. Often it has been linked to other crucial bases of difference, discrimination and inequality; yet, almost without exception, it was the ultimately deciding factor in South African society.

To recognise and state this, is however not to seek to detract from that unity from which the debate, this dialogue amongst compatriots, departs. “Our people,” said Nelson Mandela in one of his last speeches as President, “have reached out to one another across...divisions...to live out together the consequences of the profound but simple fact that, complex as history may have made our society, we are one people with one destiny.” And one knows that it is in that spirit, and from that point of departure, that the government of his successor has initiated this important national dialogue: that we are all who live here as citizens, in equal measure South Africans, with equal responsibility to give content and expression to the founding concepts of nationhood as contained in our Constitution and right to share in the fruits of that nationhood.

This Conference is itself part of the “history of race” in our country. It comes at a specific and critical period in that process of transition to a non-racial democratic society. The cessation of hostilities between the principal antagonists in the political struggle, the negotiation of a peaceful transition to democracy on the basis of a founding consensus and the enactment of a new constitutional order heralded in the first period. The constitution embodied the vision of a united non-racial society, which would in all its parts strive to work together to overcome the divisions of the past and to eradicate the inequality and imbalances derived from that past.

There was always the recognition that the effects and consequences of centuries of division and injustice would not be eradicated immediately. As a country and nation we departed from that constitutional platform in the belief that through it the rapid advancement to a better life, particularly for the poor, had become possible. Where poverty was so much a function of racial allocation of station, the achievement of the better life envisaged meant a concrete addressing of the legacy of racism and the creation of circumstances where racism as felt practice would increasingly recede.

In the first years of our democracy the framework of policy, legislation and constitution was established for the achievement of the goals of that founding consensus, and the ethos of partnership and the values of non-racialism, non-sexism and equity began to take root. Such was the advance made in this regard that the President was able to say in his first address to Parliament last year that we have never been so well placed to make rapid and substantial progress towards those goals. It is not as a pathologically torn society, on the verge of racial conflagration and disintegration, that we gather at and conduct this national debate.

We must also recognise that though we have made progress, the legacy of our past continues to play itself out in the material division of our people largely along the

historical fault-lines of colour and in discriminatory and too often violent and oppressive ways. The deracialisation of our society therefore requires us to understand the persistence of racism in our institutions, structures and social practices, and to engage in overcoming it.

It is at this point in the “history of race” in our country that this debate occurs: now as a means of advancing us towards the eradication of the remnants of our racial past, and as a nation joined in the search for a non-racist future.

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The thematic title of this first day’s proceedings, History, nature and sources of racism reminds us, even perhaps inadvertently, that racism is an historical phenomenon, rooted and located in the specific and concrete history of a particular society. It is not, as we are often tempted to reflect upon it in popular discourse, a timeless disease against which people need to be inoculated in a general manner.

The approach to racism as historically specific rather than a trans-historical phenomenon helps to focus our minds on the specific institutions, structures and practices within which racism occurs and manifests itself. This balances a primary emphasis on the attitude that tends to render the phenomenon as a pervasive disease rather than identifiable sets of actions that can be dealt with.

It is not clear to me that much can be gained from an attempt by me to trace in this address the myriad paths that racial practice and racism has followed throughout human history; or to reflect upon the many theories on the origins of racism.

Mention has already been made of the colonial past that has been so crucial in shaping our society and the patterns of relations with which we are still so much burdened. The history of colonial dispossession and the material and cultural alienation and subjugation of the indigenous people - in the case of the Khoisan, it amounted to virtual decimation - was one consistent project and systematic practice of racism. It lies at the historic root of racial attitudes and the institutions and practice of racism in this country.

It is interesting, also in view of our attempts to give content to an African Renaissance, to recall that colonialism was one outflow of the European Renaissance. The birth of humanism with its self-confident belief in the ability of Man saw the daring exploration of the unknown world and the expansion of European influence over the entire planet, mostly with cruel disregard for the non-European other encountered. In many respects Apartheid represented the last remnant of racial colonialism; in an ironic way, therefore, a key expression of the European Renaissance was finally ended with the demise of formal racial rule in South Africa.

More instructive for an understanding of the decisively formative origins of South African racism would be the identification of what can be called “fateful moments” in our history. The fate of independent African polities at the conclusion of the wars of colonial dispossession; the racial structuring with the great economic shifts through the discovery of minerals in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century; the real story of the South African War and the formation of Union; the various Land Acts; the post

World War I labour turmoil and its political outcomes; the post World War II turn towards apartheid; the intensification of state repression in the last decades of apartheid rule - these would be some such key moments in shaping race relations and racism in this country.

Generic to most of these “fateful moments” - of which smaller scale equivalents would most certainly be identified - will be that they each time served to lend greater structural and institutional support to the white population’s sense of superiority and right to rule and dominate. The cruelty and the disregard for the value of black life ran like a thread through these events in our history.

There are other “fateful moments” that shaped race relations in a different way and direction such as the formation of the African National Congress or the commencement of CODESA. The response of the liberation movement to repression, racial injustice and the shaping of South African society represents in many respects a more relevant part of the “history of race” for the current purposes of transforming our society.

I have argued elsewhere that a public rediscovery and affirmation of that history could assist in addressing national reconciliation - and as part of that, the eradication of the remnants of racism - in a more constructive way. There is an implicit temptation in current discussions of national reconciliation to assume a kind of two-stage approach to reconciliation as a project that is subsequent to the attainment of national democracy, as something that only starts now in national life and is therefore still far from being realised. This approach tends to pathologise a society that on the scale of world affairs serves as a singularly successful example of a country with racial and ethnic diversity, histories of strife and competing interests, that had resolved its potentially destructive conflicts consensually and had demonstrated within itself the political will and institutional means to cohere.

This “two stage” approach ignores the fact that national reconciliation was in effect concurrently imbedded in the liberation and democratic struggle. What the attainment of democratic government achieved was to free up institutional and other forms of social energy for the *advancement* and *consolidation* rather than *initiation* of national reconciliation.

The anti-apartheid struggle (used here as a collective to describe the variety of political and social forces internally, in exile and in prison that combined to oppose and seek the overthrow of the white minority-ruled polity and social order) often characterised itself as being an exercise in nation-building at the same time as it represented an oppositional act against a racially based system. Its nation-building character, it would claim, was not only derived from its end goal of a united South African nation, but resided as much in the form, processes and informing ideologies of its conduct.

The concept of non-racialism, as espoused by a dominant strand of the liberation and democratic movement, emphasised the analytical and strategic value of uniting in struggle, ideally under African leadership, participants from different communities or national groups - thereby advocating the sought after objective as well as anticipating it and laying its foundations in and through the process of struggle.



At one time a very influential conceptual tool emanating from a section of the anti-apartheid movement, was the typification of the South African social formation as colonialism of a special type. At the heart of this conceptualisation was the theoretical and strategic assumption of the (latent) unity of the post-1910 South African nation. South Africa was approached in struggle as a late colonial society in which coloniser and colonised lived and belonged to a shared political and geographical terrain without assuming that the coloniser had a home elsewhere.

The nature of the resistance and liberation struggle as well as the societal goals it posed were fundamentally influenced by the above concepts, which were derived from the particular analytical reading of the nature of the contested social and political space. National reconciliation was a tool or means of struggle as much as a “reconciled nation” was the goal to be achieved by that struggle.

This sense of ‘positive future trends’ already being manifest in the perverted present (though not yet fully realised), always seemed to motivate key aspects of the South African political struggle. This partly explains why even in the fiercest periods of clashes between forces of resistance and suppression the conflict was not typified or ideologically presented as purely or totally racial. The integrated and racially interdependent (though fundamentally unequal) nature of the economy, the history of urbanisation, the political processes following the last wars of colonial dispossession, and the social impact of the fundamental shifts in the economy in the decades immediately prior to the establishment of the Union of South Africa, represent some of the material factors which underlie this accentuated (and in many ways typically South African) awareness of a latent national unity.

The often referred to “miracle” of the eventual peaceful transition from racial minority rule to non-racial democracy is significantly demystified by such an acknowledgement of this political history, which also places in a somewhat different perspective some current renderings of the demand for national reconciliation. Such a reading would emphasise that national reconciliation is not a new process to be initiated in a situation of threatening large-scale disintegration; and that current more spiritual notions of reconciliation as being primarily acts amongst individuals or sets of individuals can be usefully complemented by an institutional and material approach.

The achievement in South Africa of a constitutional state of its nature and through that particular process is the single most telling statement of national reconciliation. It is of note that while the Union of South Africa, which defined the territorial and juridical arena within and over which the modern struggle around the politics of racial domination and subjugation was conducted, came out of a series of highly destructive wars of colonial dispossession and imperial conflict, modern day South Africans averted a widely predicted civil war and racial conflagration and as the alternative produced one of the most acclaimed democratic and diversity-accommodating constitutions in the world.

A historical perspective that thus recognises that the major liberation struggle had from inception consistently been a defense of the ideal of the non-racial unity of the South African nation could serve to fortify the confidence in continuous nationhood.

The political basis to a united South African nationhood tangibly exists. Divisions, differences and conflicting interests of various kinds, levels and intensity occur throughout this society and some of these are remnants, even uninterrupted continuations, of defining features of the contradictions of apartheid and colonial South Africa. None of these, however, can be said to threaten the legal, political or constitutional order. South Africans act out their differences within the framework of their constitution. That is the defining historically conditioned context for combating racism in South Africa today.

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*“Strategies for combating racism”* is the theme for the discussions and deliberations of another day in this conference. A few concluding remarks to this paper briefly touching on the theme of that day may, however, be in order at this point.

Poverty and its historic and continuing overlap with racial distinctions represent the major manifestation of racism as felt practice in our society. Our major challenge therefore is to harness and mobilise national resources and energy towards the alleviation and eradication of poverty. Dominant economic power continues to be in the hands of the white sector of the population; while the shift of that power to be more reflecting of the demographics of our society will be a gradual process, the immediate building of a patriotic partnership between government and also that traditional part of the private sector is crucial to the national project of poverty alleviation. The challenge to traditional white business is to demonstrate a commitment in practice to adding social value to the new societal dispensation. The social compact between business, labour and government as envisaged in NEDLAC needs now more than ever to be pursued and implemented as a national project, with the alleviation of poverty as central focus.

The combating of the occurrence of racist practice across the various sectors of society is an institutional matter. Where it occurs it should be dealt with as it represents the antithesis of what South Africa is moving towards. The various organs and agencies for citizens to seek redress and protection should be made accessible, especially to those most exposed and vulnerable to racist practices and abuse.

The issue of skewed or unrepresentative participation will for long be regarded as an index of racism as felt practice. The legislative and regulatory mechanisms for addressing these issues should be systematically promoted and implemented, while at the same time the public discourse should seek to find ways of ensuring that no section of South African society ever again feels intrinsically rejected or redundant.

Where reconciliation was often understood in the first period after the democratic elections to mean primarily a polite avoidance of an accusatory approach, it now definitely demands more active measures to create opportunities for joint activity, co-operation and understanding.

The development and entrenchment of conventions of civility, the society-wide institutionalisation of consensus seeking, and the inculcation of tolerance for difference and diversity are key social measures for dealing with the racial diversity.

While the remnants of racism reflect mostly as continuing practices of discrimination against black people, we should remain alert to the dangers of inter-black antagonisms and conduct as well as to those of pervasive anti-whiteism.

The leadership of the liberation movement as government is crucial to the manner in which we address racism and the promotion of non-racialism and anti-racism in our society. Its history equips it with the moral wherewithal to eradicate racist practices without re-racialising society.

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South African society would truly have been miraculous if there were no remnants of its racist past. We do now have the institutional mechanisms to deal with occurrences of racism. Where it asserts itself, it should be firmly dealt with. More importantly and enduringly, we should build on the positive foundations of transition and constitutional order to develop the non-racial reality that is already emerging.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RACISM 2000  
Thursday, 31 August 2000**

Greetings and thank you. I am honored to be here, honored to have been asked to be part of this remarkable convening. I am honored and humbled, for as an American whose specialty is race relations in the United States, I have much to learn from all of you. Thus I offer my remarks only as a point of departure, as something to argue about, as a suggestion of direction. From here I know that you will take this conversation to places I cannot yet imagine.

I have been asked to reflect upon the consequences, impact and contemporary forms of racism. My observations will touch on the following categories: first the relation of race to economic concerns and class; second, questions of pseudo-science and neo-Darwinian eugenic arguments as they touch on questions of merit, affirmative action, and education; and third, questions of taboo, untouchability, aesthetics (including the question of perceived beauty) and quarantine (including questions of illness, stress, depression and drug use, and of course criminalization and imprisonment).

Let me start by telling you how I began my last semester of teaching at Columbia Law School in New York City. It was the first day of class; one of my students raised her hand and said: "Excuse me, Professor Williams, I am looking forward to this seminar, but I wanted to tell you that I will have to miss next week because I am putting myself through law school by selling my eggs, and that is when the procedure will be done."

She said this very calmly, and no one in the class seemed terribly upset, and I divined that somehow the world was changing faster than I knew. It turns out that my student was being paid \$50,000/USD per harvest (as it is called), because there is a market for the eggs of tall blue-eyed women with good family health histories and high test scores.

But let me come back to this story. In my career as a law professor, I teach contracts, commercial law and consumer protection. I teach the law of exchange and efficiency, of promises and structured expectation. I teach the law of how to put objects into the stream of commerce, the bloodstream of society's supply and demand, of discard and desire.

Contract law is about alienation, about making strange, putting at a distance, transforming into something else, fixing a price, making interchangeable with the currency of the realm. Contract law is thus in tension with that which American constitutional theory considered "unalienable", or what can't be sold: that is, the notion of corporeal integrity, mental and physical inviolability, the pricelessness of our bodies, the embodiment of our dignity - all that we enshrine in the notion of civil rights and human rights.

This tension between what can be sold and what ought not to be sold is also an overlap, or an intersection of course. It is the place where we consider questions such as slavery, indentured servitude, prostitution and trafficking in women and children. Classically, the law of efficient exchange ruled fungible goods, inanimate objects with no special cultural, sentimental or emotional value. So it is also the place where we look at transactions that appear to be about will-less, soul-less objects but that somehow pertain to life, dignity, will, soul - what we love and therefore do not wish to be treated as fungible or inanimate. Thus, examples that might deserve special scrutiny include the marketing of blood, body parts, human sperm and eggs, adoptions of children where they begin to look less like altruism and more like sales, health care, reproductive medical technology, and biotechnological and genetic engineering.

So here I am, the descendant of slaves who were bought and sold for undetermined amounts and not so very long ago. Here I am, teaching the law of the land, to a young white woman who sells what are marketed as Ivy League eggs - elite, intelligent, top university-type eggs for fifty thousand eggs per harvest.

An interesting aside: this young woman's best friend is apparently a young black woman who is also trying to sell her Ivy League eggs to the highest bidder, but alas, she's had no takers. So she remains busy filling out financial aid forms.

Life is filled with strange and ironic twists. Anyway, it costs anywhere from about \$25000 to \$50000 USD to house a prisoner for a year in the United States. Over two million are in jails or prison or otherwise tied up in the criminal justice system - most of those black or brown Latino. This incarceration rate - the highest in the world or close to it - has spawned its own economy. The union of prison guards is among the most powerful lobbying organizations in America. The building of prisons is the fastest growing area of the public sector economy.

But let me tie all this back to my concerns about the intergenerational injury of slavery which was, after all, not just a system of commerce, but the story of suppressed and disordered family connections, molestation, legalized violence and great trauma to both blacks and whites. Recently, Americans, and perhaps the world, have seen the saga that has unfolded around the pretty dispositive DNA proof that Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, fathered at least one and probably all six of his slave Sally Hemings' children.

By most estimates at least four-fifths of African-Americans have some slavemaster mixed up in them, a long-standing statistic that has nothing at all to do with the recent, growing, but still miniscule rates of intermarriage. The pervasiveness of this history is as plain as the faces all around us. Yet most commentators scurried back and forth between revisionist explanations that exceptionalized it, as though it were a tragic romance on the order of Romeo and Juliet.

What I find most disturbing is that so many commentators seem not to understand the actual and historical meaning of slavery as a system of human “ownership”. Television anchors repeatedly referred to the relationship as “illicit”. Illicit means unlawful, not permitted. But a master’s breeding his slaves was not only permissible but widespread. After all, the system of chattel slavery meant precisely that: you got to treat your slaves like livestock. Yes, some slaves were treated better than others, some dearly “loved” by their masters, some put out to pasture to make their way freely on their own - but then so were a lot of horses, cows and sheep. In his book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson’s clinical delineations of how to improve the “stock” of one’s slaves are a subset of his views on animal husbandry. Far from being an aberration, his musings evidence a gentlemanly familiarity with the dominant theories of race science at the time: “Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race. Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Orangutan for the black women over those of his own species.”

But if the admixture of white blood into black was deemed an improvement to erstwhile dusky-hued unfortunates, the mixing of black blood into white was a calamity to be avoided at all costs. Jefferson warned emphatically of the sullied sensibilities and lowered faculties thus engendered, concluding that among the Romans, emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us, a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.

Some historians have found Jefferson’s stance on this contradictory. But Jefferson’s bias against race-mixing was not really aimed at preventing male slave owners from bedding their slaves in the pursuit of more progeny-as-property (and let us not forget that a lighter-skinned slave, in this unfortunate economy, was often higher-priced). Rather, Jefferson, in line with the general anti-miscegenationist sentiments of the day, was more concerned with ensuring a system of primogeniture based on a presumed purity of bloodlines.

Such a system of privilege required not only an obsessive monitoring of the socially constructed boundaries of blood and race, it actively disabled white women and people of color from assuming agency in the creation of families of their own. Indeed, one of the most powerful ways that the logic-box of slavery operated was by suspending the vocabulary of familial or affilial relation, and supplanting it with the discourse of commerce. Substituting words like ‘master’ and ‘owner’ for other words like ‘father’ and ‘brother’ made invisible both the ties of family and the taboos,

including incest. We struggle to this day with the gaps engendered by those institutionalized denials. Consider, for example, William Safire's observation that Jefferson's wife's father was also the father of the slave Sally; or The Washington Post's description of Hemings as 'Jefferson's wife's illegitimate half-sister'. Such tortured designations hide the fact that in today's world we would simply call such a person a sister-in-law - and a fourteen year old sister-in-law at that. But there was little 'in-law' that recognized Hemings humanity - to say nothing of a sisterly bond.

Moreover, since slaves did not have the legal capacity to contract, they could not be formally married. Thus, the concepts of adultery, illegitimacy or 'bastardy' were legally inapplicable to slaves; and in a system where paternity functioned chiefly to regulate the passage of property rights and citizenship, the notion of slaves as progenitors of their own families was judicially beside the point.

The implications of this economy are many. In my work, I explore the eugenic impulses surrounding the investments and allocation of resources that have begun to hover at the edges of the genetic engineering industry. But for now, I hope you will allow me a rather complex meditation about the way in which this system of valuation has aggedted the assignment of character and the valuing of status along race and gender lines, at least in the United States and perhaps beyond.

In 1835, Kate, a slave, having run away repeatedly, was eventually brought by her purchaser into court in order to have her returned to her vendor. The claim that the purchaser made of the vendor was based on the assertion of a so-called redhibitory vice - an old type of civil claim. The "claim" was for the return of the price paid, and the "vice" alleged was that Kate was "crazy," to use the precise language of the court. The vendor's defense was that she was "not crazy but only stupid."

The amount of money at issue, legally speaking, would have been based on the market valuations of the buyer and the seller, on their agreement, on their expectations, on their speculation. Kate's value would have been fixed by their mutually negotiated imagination of her worth as measured against the fair-average (or reasonably-stupid-but-not-crazy) fertile female slave. This they encapsulated in the price, which in the law of contract is aptly enough called "the consideration." Kate's worth was measured, in other words, by the consideration of her owners, past present and future. Her alienation and acquisition depended on their shared regard, the marriage of expectations whose vector fixed her worth; their will be done, amen.

Kate was deemed "useless" by judicial decree, and her purchaser was allowed to return her. What I find interesting is the tension imposed by the structure of alternatives: on the one hand, a finding of craziness amounted to a holding that she was uncontrollable, unpredictable, worthless; as a subcategory of property, few expectations could ever have been formed about her; she would perpetually subvert their best desire. Such a finding presupposed that she was never what she seemed, so it would be hard, even impossible, to speculate about her. Like a mad dog or a wild horse, she wouldn't make good property in a system that envisions property as the extension of the will of the owner. Stupidity, on the other hand, didn't interfere with her as good property because stupidity in slaves was foreseeable, part of the assumed risk of purchasing slaves, a built-in expectation of reasonable slave-traders.

Now another way to look at Kate is that she was neither stupid nor crazy, but very, very smart. The facts showed that she had burned up her master's bed; then she ran away. It doesn't take too much, I think, to read between those lines. Thus, she seemed quite rational to me.

Kate's "crazy" behavior may seem rational to many of us from today's historical perspective, standing as we are, somewhat beyond the particular social arrangements of that time. Yet perhaps it requires assuming the perspective of the owner of human property to understand how lack of control of the owner could be deemed the "stupidity" of the slave, an intrinsic defect in the property, an inherent biological difference; or how the exercise of slave will, the willfulness of property, could be defined as crazy, as vice. For all of what I deem to be her abundantly apparent sanity and good sense, there is a certain symmetry of thought - dare I say logic - that at that time and in that place, and in the paradigm of that contract for her sale, Kate could not have been seen as smart and sane. It would have risked throwing the whole slave property and contract system into disorder, it would have risked leaving her vendor and purchaser "out of control."

I retell the story of Kate because I think that many aspects of that dynamic live on subtly but very powerfully today. The degree to which certain passionate social proclamations of "rational order" might disguise more sinister investments in pure, self-serving rationalization is a phenomenon for which we as a society ought to be very vigilant.

Is there, I wonder, a way in which the traces of a social logic rooted in white supremacy survive in the shiftiness of labels like crazy, stupid, willful? What I am suggesting is that in the context of racial politics, rationality reserves for itself, not merely the right of choice, but the protective cloak of infinite will, of an expressive willfulness for which there is no perceived necessity for sanction, and no apparent limit.

What does it mean in today's world, for example, when whole communities are effectively dismissed as "crazy" with the employ of such terms as "culture of pathology?" as minority communities are labelled and dismissed in the U.S.; as hysterical, as women are too often dismissed; as 'criminally disposed' as young black men are profiled and made suspect in many places around the world.

In any event, I am convinced that most of the things that make you stupid are also the things that drive you crazy; and that sometimes the craziest people only survive because they are very, very smart. But I am interested in how the conjunctives or disjunctives, the and's and the or's, placed between words like crazy, stupid, smart and sane vary with time and the vestments of power - as with Kate the crazy slave and Sally Hemings, 'the attractive helpmeet', as one columnist praised her. These categorizations are dressed, moreover, with all the full power and violence of legal sanction, of life and of death.

Taboos that amount to death. Taboos about ardor, possession, license, equivocation, equanimity, indifference, intolerance, rancor, dispossession, innocence, exile and candor.

In effect, these taboos describe boundaries of valuation. Whether something is inside or outside the marketplace of rights is one way of valuing it. Where a valued object is located outside the market, it is generally understood to be too 'priceless' to be accommodated by ordinary exchange relationships.

If the prize is located within the marketplace, then all objects outside become 'valueless'. Traditionally, what we value most - whether one of a kind objects like the Shroud of Turin or the Mona Lisa, or life itself - most especially human life - this is the sort of subject traditionally removed from the fungibility of commodification - because deemed priceless.

Thus when black people were bought and sold as slaves, they were placed beyond the bounds of humanity. And thus in the twistedness of our brave new world, when blacks have been thrust out of that market and it is white eggs and children who are bought and sold, black life risks being devalued by the presumption of non-market status - e.g., 'underclass' as being that which is beneath all economic classification; or 'surplus' as one American judge referred to homeless black babies; or 'overpopulation' for purposes of welfare, schools, labor, prisons, or death row.

I think this is the broad shape of the contemporary challenge of race in a global market. And as a child of the American civil rights movement, I greet it with energy and patience and a pragmatic sense of optimism.

Class. Gender. Race.

Some have said that the civil rights movement gave rise to so called piggy-backed movements - women's rights, old people's rights, ethnic and immigrant rights, children's rights and a host of their human concerns. But I sometimes think that the image of piggy-backing is the wrong one; it implies one set of concerns piled on top of another growing heavier and heavier, while all sink further under the weight. It implies limitation rather than expansiveness, and the civil rights movement was nothing if not expansive in its thought. Its message was one that suffused, changed, and again, inspired all those who heard it. And that is how it has come to be invoked in social contexts as diverse as the women's movement, Tiananmen Square and South Africa.

Sometimes I do wonder what Dr. Martin Luther King would be saying today; times have changed in so many ways. But in its most direct sense, the civil rights movement set into motion a generational wave of legal and social challenges. Every step has been met with resistance, been countered with struggle.

Now that struggle is at the point where we, the first beneficiaries of the American civil rights babies, are in our forties and fifties; where people get tenure or rise to managerial positions, or establish themselves and their ideas as part of the system of things.

It is no wonder that this next level of resistance has been called the culture wars. It is about the ideas, the culture, the thought of those whose bodies have pushed open the door; it is about whether we who have gained such recent admission will be able to leave our mark. It is about who may contribute to the canon, may speak in the boardroom, may participate in the artworld, may inscribe themselves on the pages of



history, - It is about whether we will inspire the hearts of the world with our vision too... It is no wonder that we have culture wars just now.

We should not be discouraged by this resistance. We were naive if we expected less. It is part of the ongoing digestive process of human rights; simple but very complicated social medicine.

It is easy to give in to the feeling sometimes that ours is an era of Tough Love, little faith, and no charity. But I suspect that Dr. King would be a proponent not of tough love but of the notion that love is tough. It takes work to sustain, thought to convey, time to commit. Civil rights work, human rights work is never a finished product. Human and civil rights have a shape something like fire. Like Prometheus we are charged with a gift that must be tended, and fed, guarded and wisely employed.

In an era of bad faith, it takes resilience. In times of no hope, it takes tenacious optimism.

And in moments of precious little charity it takes the most determined generosity. Dr. King said, "Civil rights is an eternal moral issue." The revolution of love of which he spoke did not envision a world in which we all smile and hug and sing. Again, it was not that romantic, and it was not that easy.

The love of which he spoke requires not so much singing as acting with determined respect for one another.

It requires not so much smiling, but that we respond with tenacity and resilience even when there is little to smile about in the immediate moment.

It requires not literal hugging but that we maintain a resolute sense of purpose about the large goals, the long-range ends - for I do not need to tell you, we have so much yet to accomplish.

And so today let us remember the life of Dr. King, not to bury him in the past, but to keep his spirit alive, to fuel our optimism about how much we have achieved. Let us celebrate his life to fuel not just our hope but also our certainty that we can accomplish much, much more, in this our new millennium. For what remains to be done is no less of a moral challenge that what we faced in the past, but also not worse. To many of us, the world feels more fragmented than it once did, the problems of prejudice at once more subtle and more entrenched. But we would be naive if we had expected the demons of prejudice to stand still. It is in the nature of things to change, and that is why Dr. King spoke of the eternity of this as a moral issue.

So if racism reinvents itself, if class bias finds ways to divide - if all the -isms of the past and lots of brand-new -isms are busy realigning and disguising themselves creatively; well then, we must be all the more creative. We must realign ourselves into new and flexible coalitions. We must apply and re-apply all our talent and best imagination to bringing into being what Dr. King described as the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice. We must make real that 'daring to dream' of which we speak so frequently and perhaps too casually.

We must be grittily, steadfastly, tenaciously, determined to dream, and to act - to bring our best visions into the realm of reality.

## **RESPONDENT SPEECH - THURSDAY 31 AUGUST 2000**

**Dr Pallo Jordan**

Thank you Chairperson.

Mr Chairman, Ministers, MECs, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A comrade once asked before a meeting, what are you going to say? I replied, well I'm never at a loss for words.

This is one time I cannot confidently say that. I think everyone will agree that Professor Williams' contribution is an extremely hard act to follow. A hard act to follow because, although she ranged over a very wide canvas, casting her eye back over history, and back again to the present, it was very instructive, especially for us South Africans today.

I think what we can distil from what she has said is that racism, like tyranny and hell, is not easily conquered. Which is why this Conference is so important for us as South Africans. When one considers that slavery, chattel slavery, in the United States was abolished in 1863 and a century after that a major national demonstration, drawing in black and white Americans across the political spectrum - from civic organisations, labour organisations, civil rights organisations, religious organisations - the March on Washington, demanding freedom and jobs, was still necessary. And, two years after that, the most far-reaching civil rights legislation in the United States was passed by the Johnson administration. Yet at the end of the century, Professor Williams can still speak in this manner. One can recognise that racism is not something that you can just glibly talk about; it is not something that will go away because we want to wish it away.

Racism is something we have to uproot. It's something we have to struggle against. And that is a struggle we have to engage in, night and day, both within our society, and within ourselves.

The goals of this Conference are embodied in the Constitution of our country. The primary aim of this Conference is facilitation of the nation building process.

Facilitation of the nation building process by eradicating the left over baggage of the era of colonialism and apartheid. And it is our earnest hope, all of us who are participating in this conference, that amongst its outcomes will be the acceleration of the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist society and the fostering of the emergence of a common South African identity and a shared patriotism.

It was necessary though, that we go through this process so that we can at least arrive at a shared conceptualisation of the problem of racism. So that we can reach a common understanding of the tasks before us and what we need to do, as a nation, to root racism out of our society and from ourselves as individuals.

What I found particularly instructive about what Professor Williams said, is the dimension of the denial of racism which one finds, especially amongst those who were or are the perpetrators of racism.

A few months ago in Britain, a well-known historian was very sternly reprimanded by a judge of the high court. He had actually taken legal action against certain people who had accused him of holocaust denial. He was very sternly rebuked by the judge because he had systematically engaged in holocaust denial. In the admonition the judge pronounced, amongst other things, he said that holocaust denial was a grave violation, not only of the academic discipline of historiography, but engaging in holocaust denial verged on a crime against the people who were the victims of the holocaust.

We here in South Africa, I think, are experiencing something very similar to holocaust denial. Though I'm not going to try to place apartheid on the same scale as the holocaust of the Jews of Europe, there is a tendency to move in that direction amongst many of our fellow citizens. People who wish to induce a state of national amnesia, so much so, that many a time visitors from outside South Africa, in conversation will tell you, that "I don't understand how apartheid came into being, every white person I've met, says they were not responsible for it". And indeed, indeed the particular white people that that person might have met, might not have been responsible for it.

But the fact of the matter is that the apartheid government was voted into office by the white electorate of this country in 1948 with a small majority. But thereafter they returned it with bigger and bigger majorities well into the 1980's. That is a fact. And it is no use trying to pretend it didn't happen. It's no use pretending it didn't happen when we all know it happened.

There was not a single black person on the electoral register at the time that the National Party was returned with those bigger and bigger majorities! In fact, the National Party had made certain that there would be no black person on the electoral register. Because one of the first actions that the National Party took, after it came into office, was to abolish the coloured vote. It did that in 1951. The case went to the Supreme Court, the government lost it. The NP then packed the Supreme Court and packed the Senate and was able to pass the law in 1955.

So don't let's pretend these things didn't happen. They did happen.

It is also a fact that during all those years, business in this country felt extremely comfortable with the regime of apartheid. As authoritative a source as Dr Louis Luyt, recently of the Democratic Alliance, said in 1981 that the majority of South African businesses were very happy with the apartheid regime until they felt that it might be earning them opprobrium overseas.

So do not pretend that South African business was not comfortable with the apartheid regime.

The importance of facing up to these facts, is that if we did not do so, we would be behaving like someone who is stricken with a mortal illness, but who refuses to listen

to the diagnosis of his doctor, who refuses to listen to the diagnosis of specialists, but prefers to resort to “snake oil cures”.

Why this Conference is important for South Africa is that after the Second World War, after 1948, this country did in fact become the fountainhead of racism from which every type of bigot and misanthrope drew inspiration.

It is our hope that democratic South Africa could become a beacon for a truly non-racial world. We can become that beacon if we, as South Africans, black, brown, and white are prepared to rise to that challenge. That requires that all of us make a commitment to root racism out of our society. That will perhaps require the same degree of determination and single-mindedness as the racist displayed in pursuance of their pipe dreams of “separate development”, “white supremacy with justice”, etcetera. But it is something that we have to do.

I am particularly interested in some of the facts that Professor Williams placed before us. Yesterday in one of the groups I was participating in, there was discussion of what an integrationist paradigm could be. Someone suggested what many people, with very good intentions, see as an integrationist paradigm and the person said, “well in my country there is in fact evolving a colour blind generation who all consider themselves British, whether their fore-bears came from the British Isles, from the Caribbean, from Africa, from the Indian sub-continent or wherever, they all consider themselves British”.

Now that’s a very attractive idea and people sometimes think that that is what one is talking about when one talks about non-racialism. But if you recall the Professor’s response to the question from Professor Gutto, the question about her so-called colour blind son, you can see the dangers in that. I don’t think non-racialism means denying difference and denying diversity. If anything, it means the assertion of difference, the assertion of diversity, but accepting diversity and difference as enriching qualities in a society, and not as sources of conflict or as sources of division. Because as she says, a well-intentioned teacher says to a child, “no, colour does not matter, colour is irrelevant”. But the teacher says that not because the teacher is a racist or because the teacher wants to confuse the kid. But in saying it, the teacher ducks a very sore point about American society: that colour in fact does matter in US society.

But the effect is that it confuses the child. The effect of ducking the issue of colour does not address the problem. In fact, in an odd sort of way, it helps to perpetuate it.

I am attracted also to another fact she placed before us: that in America these days, there is developing this notion of an under-class, an under-class of people who are economically marginalised, and who can be dealt with by, maybe, just building more prisons and shutting them away. And whilst she was saying that I jotted down the South African equivalent. You will recall that in the apartheid days there was the notion of “surplus people.” How different are those two notions from each other and how far apart are those two notions from each other? We should ask ourselves also, given the sort of troubled times the economy of South Africa is going through, that economies on the African continent are going through, what dangers will accompany the continued marginalisation of the African continent and other developing countries? Is there not a real danger that this notion of “surplus people” could swallow

up this entire continent, including South Africa itself? That is, on a world scale rather than within one society, all Africans could be seen as “surplus people”?

Professor Williams warns us also about another buzzword that has been appropriated by certain persons in our own political culture. We speak of affirmative action, but there are other players in South Africa who deliberately try to construe that as “quotas”.

I was not aware that the notion of affirmative action as quotas was the result of intervention by conservative lobbyists in the United States and I’m very glad to find that out from the Professor. Thank you.

But we know that in our own society, when we speak about affirmative action, there are those who say you are introducing a “quota system”, knowing full well that the term “quota” has the loaded nuances that the Professor has referred to.

The danger of appropriating this sort of language and introducing it to the South African context, again, is that it is a dimension of this syndrome of denial. “These things didn’t happen.” “We don’t have these problems.” When you try to take remedial steps, people stand in your way. Let us face it, ladies and gentlemen, the problem of racism in the United States could probably have been resolved a long time ago were it not for the organised resistance, and sometimes brutally organised resistance, of those who were its beneficiaries in the past.

One can recall the activities of bodies such as the White Citizens Councils in the South, of the Klu-Klux-Klan and bodies like it. We all know about these organised agents for resistance to change. But there were also more subtle forms of resistance to change. There was for example the court action by a gentleman called Bakke, who tried to overturn affirmative action. There was the resistance to bussing, organised by a body in the City of Boston, Massachusetts.

Boston was the fountainhead of the American Revolution. That city was the site of the Boston Massacre, which sparked the revolution. And yet that is where this organised resistance took place to the bussing of school children as a device for overcoming the segregation of education in the United States. These things happened.

These forms of organised resistance, at the end of the day, help to perpetuate racism. They don’t assist us in getting rid of it. And I want to appeal to our white compatriots. Whether subtle, whether up-front, whether hidden, whether overt or covert, these attempts to resist change are not helpful to our country, and to our society.

We had for example yesterday, a union, the White Mine Workers Union. We all know its history. I don’t think there is anyone here who does not know the record of the White Mine Workers Union, yet they have the audacity, (in fact the word audacity is impoverished, can’t capture it, the Yiddish word Chutzpah, Chutzpah is the word that captures it) the Chutzpah to demonstrate here! The White Mine Workers Union saying they are opposed to the “new racism” of affirmative action! I mean, really? Really?

And then other people interviewed about this conference yesterday, saying, “Well, eh, they’re talking as if racism is just a vice of the whites. Racism, everyone is responsible for it, black and white equally.” Really?

These are very, very dangerous things to do and one is not mentioning them here to embarrass anyone, but let’s get real. Let us please be serious about the issue of racism.

There was a report last night about a schoolgirl who was accused of shoplifting. A black schoolgirl, and the shop manager ripped off her shirt, she was naked from the waist up and painted her white, and then pushed her out into the street.

If that had happened to a white girl and had been done by a black manager, does anyone here doubt what would have happened in that city or to that black manager? Does anyone have any doubt?

We all know that a black man who dared to do that a white girl would have been lynched. But this one thinks he can get away with it because it’s a black kid. Now these are the realities of our South African existence. Many will say, “Oh, that’s an isolated incident”. Not quite as isolated as people might think. What we are addressing, ladies and gentlemen, are not just incidents of personal acts of racism. What we are trying to address is a system of institutionalised racism, which was institutionalised and codified in law for so many, many, many years in our country.

Institutionalised to the extent that it became almost like second nature to most of us who grew up in apartheid South Africa. And even those of us who did not grow up in apartheid South Africa very quickly internalised the taboos, the prohibitions, and the restrictions that came with it. A South African family, who’d immigrated to the United States, some years ago, the kids grew up in Detroit, Michigan, visited home here and within a matter of weeks those kids knew it all. “No Mum you shouldn’t go in there,” “No Mum you shouldn’t take that train.” “No Mum you shouldn’t go in that restaurant”. They learnt it in a matter of weeks. They’d never experienced apartheid South Africa before, but in a matter of weeks they’d internalised its practices. That’s what one is talking about.

And institutionalised racism is not merely about don’t go into that bus, don’t go into that train, don’t go into that restaurant. It is actually about the dehumanisation of human beings. Creating a moral universe from which certain people are excluded by virtue of their colour, or because of their national origin.

The story of Kate the slave that Professor Williams recounted here, I think highlights that exactly. Because Kate was just like a horse or an ox or a sheep or a goat, she could be bought and sold on the market place like an ox or goat, a bag of tea, a sack of tobacco.

And when it was found that the pound of tobacco was not what it was purported to be, you return it to the seller, which is what the buyer in this instance did. Of course this was not a pound of tobacco; it was another human being who had a will, who had feelings, who had ideas. And, when she acted on her feelings, her ideas, and her will she was therefore found to be defective.

She could be returned. But, as the professor points out, far from being crazy, as the buyer said she was, or stupid, as the seller said she was, she was actually acting in an extremely rational manner. We don't know the details of the case but the circumstantial evidence before us suggests that here was a slave woman who had been purchased and had been sexually assaulted by the buyer. And, in revenge she set his bed on fire. I suspect, she chose his bed because that's where the violation took place, and then she fled. Very rational action. But in the eyes of the buyer, crazy. In the eyes of the seller, stupid.

Now how many other instances of rebellion, by people who have been pained, who have been wounded, injured by racism, are construed as the acts of crazy people, as the acts of stupid people, or worse yet, as the acts of criminals?

Year after year, since 1994 in our newspapers we read about farm attacks. Nobody is condoning violence against other South African citizens; no one is condoning that. No one is saying it's a good thing. No one is encouraging it.

But how many of us have asked the question: What lies behind those attacks? Might it not be other "crazy" and "stupid" people like the slave woman Kate?

Professor Williams also refers to the cultural dimension of racism; which is the exercise of social power and that exercise of social power gives those who are culturally dominant the power to prescribe, to describe, to proscribe and to define. There was a time during the 1960's after Carmichael, after Malcolm, when African Americans thought it was very important to assert that black is beautiful. Most of us on the continent never had any problems about black being beautiful. We know it's beautiful. We know it's cool. But it was important for African Americans because that power to define, that cultural power to define, was held by those who were the perpetrators of racism.

They had imposed upon the notion of blackness and on blackness itself a certain negativity. And that caused people to react in pathological ways. By the denial of their identity, expressed in the hair straightening, the skin lightening creams, and so on. We have had the same sorts of pathology in our society as well.

In her remarks, Professor Williams referred to another dimension, to some of the taboos, some of the things you're not allowed to talk about or even refer to, which result from some of these pathologies. If there is that denial of identity it doesn't only produce social pathologies in the group but also in individuals. And it is common knowledge that amongst the oppressed sectors of society, both here and in the United States, this expresses itself in heavy drinking, substance abuse, etc. The impact and the effects don't remain confined within these communities. They impact on society as a whole. So if we are concerned about healing these pathologies, we have to address this issue of racism and address it seriously. It's not something that can be trivialised. It's not something that we can just pretend will go away.

In our constitution we have made a commitment to take corrective action. That is a constitutional obligation, which every party that participated in the constitutional negotiations made a commitment to: To redress the effects of apartheid. Now many who, whether they wished it or not, were the beneficiaries of the system of racism in

the past, question [a] the morality of affirmative action, [b] the effect it might have on our society. There are even some who say this is re-racialising South African politics. How, they ask, are you going to implement affirmative action except by once again introducing a population registration law? I think we have to face up front the fact that this is just patent nonsense. The fact of the matter is that any system of racism, any system of racism rewards those who are members of the dominant group purely on the strength that they belong to that group. These are unearned rewards.

If you were white in South Africa your competence was irrelevant. You were always the first person in the job queue. In fact many a time you were the only person on the job queue because other people were excluded from certain types of work. If you were white in South Africa, irrespective of what you had going for you, the best part of town was where you had the right to live. If you were white in South Africa in the past, purely by virtue of the fact that you were white, you were entitled to a free state paid education and a hot meal at school into the bargain so that you could concentrate on your work.

At the end of the day, after many, many decades of this, of course it is ridiculous to pretend that white and black South Africans are starting from the same starting line. They are not. They are not starting from the same starting line. The playing fields are far from level. All affirmative action is doing is trying to level the playing fields. It's not saying that the money in the bank, which you have as a result of all the unearned rewards you had under apartheid, will be taken away from you.

It's just saying we are levelling the playing fields and in this race we're going to give each kid running shoes. That's all, so that we can compete more or less equally. We know the one kid whose parents have got money in the bank because of unearned rewards of apartheid has had better training. We know he's had a better diet. He has had all those things. We're not saying we're going to cancel out his training or we are going to give the other kids some steroids, we are just saying everyone is going to have running shoes.

That's all we are saying.

We have through our constitution outlawed statutory racism. But the institutional residue remains with us. It remains true that, in spite of the momentous changes we have wrought since 94, the greater part of the wealth of this country remains in white hands. Something in the order of 70 to 80 percent. But this white section of the population constitutes only 11 percent of our population.

It is that disparity, that disparity that President Mbeki was trying to capture when he borrowed from Benjamin Disraeli the notion of two nations. And, to try to pretend that we are not these two nations again is an act of denial, which is going to have very dangerous consequences.

The challenges before South Africa are not small. They are not simple, and they will require a great deal of commitment from us all. But I think if we, as South Africans, pull together there is no reason why we cannot perform a miracle equal to that of the peaceful transition we made from apartheid to democracy between 1990 and 1994.

Thank you very much.



## **STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING PEACE, APPROACHES TO DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE**

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS - MS NOZIPHO JANUARY-BARDILL COMBATING RACISM: A NATION IN DIALOGUE Friday 1 September 2000**

#### 1 Introduction

In its resolution 52\111 of December 1997, in which it decided to convene the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the General Assembly of the United Nations set, as one of its main objectives of the World Conference on Racism in August 2001, the review of the political, historical, cultural and other factors leading to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

As a country that has recently emerged out of a history of the most brutal and inhumane forms of structural and systemic racism, and as a state that has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in December 1998, we owe it to our nation and the rest of the world to work decisively and actively towards peace, coexistence and acceptance, where the colour of peoples' skins, their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and other identities no longer matter. This Conference is therefore timeous and historic. We thank the President for initiating it and the Human Rights Commission for its effort to keep this important issue on our national agenda. We trust that our collective effort will contribute to the content of the World Conference.

I have just returned from attending the United Nations Expert Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to which I was elected in January this year. The committee reviews periodic reports from state parties and responds to communications from individuals whose rights have been violated. Governments send delegations to come along and say what concrete legal, administrative and other measures they have taken to ensure adequate protection of the rights of all their citizens, and particularly vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, refugees, and asylum seekers.

It is obvious from this experience that eradicating racism is a major challenge in many multiracial, multicultural and multiethnic societies. Despite the fact that people of different races, ethnicities and cultures have lived together, side by side, for several centuries, racism continues to show its ugly face in every aspect of peoples' lives. This impedes the enjoyment by individuals of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

NGOs which come along to brief the committee on the experiences of their constituencies report that racial minority groups throughout the world still suffer high rates of abuse, including exclusion from certain no go areas for black people and daily humiliation and degradation. Some receive hate mail and experience racial abuse in the work place without any access to a remedy. Others have to keep their children home from school because of racist bullying. The police still stop and search black people and other minority groups on a regular basis without compunction.

Discrimination in housing, health, social services, employment and service delivery still plagues all the world's multiracial societies.

There is some, but , legal advice to address the issue, and however many penal codes and laws exist to protect people's rights, the police remain reluctant to acknowledge racially motivated incidents and the courts often throw them out for lack of real evidence. The victims thus remain emotionally battered by these day-to-day experiences of racism and racial discrimination, with not much recourse to justice.

## 2 The changing forms of racism

South Africa is no exception. While racism has been removed from the statute books and new laws are being passed through Parliament to protect us all from discrimination, most of the practices I have just mentioned still abound.

What has changed is the form of racism. Acts of racial murders between the races still continue. Black farm workers and white farmers appear to be the most vulnerable to these murders. Racial meanings, however, are now being inferred rather than stated openly. The use of 'culture' and 'identity' as euphemisms for race, a distinctly political term, is rampant in our current discourse. It is not very often one hears the words 'human rights', however.

The whole concern with crime - indeed a serious issue, provides for many white South Africans the principal means to underscore the cultural concerns of the new racism in South Africa. Rather than trying to understand the socio-economic roots of criminal activity, the subtext of the discourse invariably surfaces in the old age notions of pathology and deviancy - qualities which define the distinctiveness of criminality in the African psyche and culture.

Similarly, the rampant racism in some schools, which the Human Rights Commission is so painstakingly addressing, signifies the struggle to maintain the school as a site for germinating and cultivating white supremacy. After all, schools mediate the relation of the community to its youthful subjects - future citizens. Desegregation threatens to contaminate white hegemony, while Curriculum 2005 might denigrate not only good educational standards but also assault the traditional values and virtues of apartheid education and particularly white superior culture. Many schools still prohibit black children from wearing their hair in locks. The discrepancies with which punishment is meted out to black and white pupils for misconduct symbolises once more who is and is not valued.

These two examples demonstrate that race and racism is far from being peripheral to social and economic life in South Africa. It is still at the core of it. To focus only on those 'exceptional' extremist groups who still murder farm workers is a grave mistake. Fundamental issues of social justice, democracy and economic power are integral to the struggle against this new form of racism and racial discrimination.

The rest of this paper will address the issues of peace, acceptance of cultural difference and tolerance as strategies for combating racial injustice as was requested by the Human Rights Commission.

### 3 Peace

This serene word says what it means. We experienced it most profoundly in 1994 when our society's peaceful elections led to a politically non-violent solution despite acts of violence in some parts of the country, notably KwaZulu Natal.

Our 'miracle' transition brought us some peace but not racial justice. That peace, according to Johan Galtung, quoted by Laurie Nathan of the Centre for Conflict Resolution, was 'negative peace' defined as the absence of violence, and not 'positive peace', defined as the presence of political and socio-economic justice.

The questions that come to mind in relation to the issue of peace are many. For example,

- How peaceful are the millions of poor South Africans who still live in the most humiliating squalor across the country where winter fires, exposure to the elements, disease, poor nutrition and psychological stress become life threatening,
- How peaceful are those of us who live behind the high walls and electric fences to protect ourselves against 'them',
- How peaceful are our immigrant communities of refugees and asylum seekers who cannot understand the levels of xenophobia and hostility towards them from a people whose liberation they so actively participated in,
- How peaceful are many women in South Africa who often do not feel that the new dispensation has brought them freedom from gender based violence,
- How can we educate an economically deprived society to respect the human rights of their fellow compatriots when they feel their own human rights and particularly their social and economic rights are not protected - when homelessness, unemployment and the lack of other basic human needs remain a threat to their lives?

The legacies of the denial of real opportunities to black people are starkly evident. The Black Economic Empowerment Commission, which is about to publicise its report, will reveal numerous obstacles that still stand in the way of more equitable access to financial resources, despite the government's attempts to create an enabling environment for institutions to transform their discriminatory procedures and practices.

Affirmative Action (AA), the most feared redistributive measure, has benefited many South Africans, albeit from largely middle class black families, who themselves had difficulty accessing jobs. But even if AA fails to reduce black poverty and contributes to the persistence of racist perceptions in the workplace, without AA, few black South Africans would have access to the country's prosperity and racism in the workplace would persist anyway.

The message that our most vociferous anti AA compatriots do not understand is that white South Africa's weak will towards racial justice and the elimination of poverty through voluntary redistributive efforts has been very obvious. If racial and gender discrimination could be addressed through genuine concern and goodwill and the expedient judgements of those who control the economy, AA would be unnecessary. Thus AA will continue to act as a useful incentive for redress and the government's Employment Equity Act of 1999 is, in this regard, one of the most powerful legal

measures for accessing opportunity and working towards the development of 'positive peace'.

If we do not fight poverty with the same energy and vigour with which we fought Apartheid, it will threaten us all. White poverty is also growing as one sees more white people begging on the streets of Gauteng. Their disaffection will not improve race relations. On the contrary they could be excellent fodder for the growing right wing movement which is international and spreading its wings fast and furiously through the internet.

The UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights has identified globalisation and economic marginalisation and its impact on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as a grave threat to human development and human rights. This issue will be central to the content of the world conference next year.

#### 4 Difference / Diversity

Difference is one of those most ordinary of words but one which we mystify in the most numerous of creative ways for a number of reasons:

- To rarify and exotify those we feel we do not know.
- To justify social exclusion by suggesting that we 'naturally' drift towards those who look, sound and behave like us,
- To make excuses for ignorance, complacency and unadulterated laziness.

We, of course, also use 'diversity' as an interesting euphemism for 'race'. Its 'neutral' and non-threatening feel makes it palatable and therefore acceptable to people across the political spectrum. Moreover, it is often coupled with the word 'culture'. And so, 'dealing with cultural diversity' and encouraging all of us to appreciate each other's cultures has, in modern day South Africa and most other parts of the world, become the sine quo non of better race relations. "Cultural Integration" and "Social Integration" are used in more or less the same way as recipes for racial harmony.

This model is not entirely ineffective if it is done in a way that avoids stereotyping the behaviours of different peoples. The limitations of the diversity and social integration models is that they reduce race to a socio-cultural phenomenon and forget its political and structural characteristics. When we call ourselves diverse we acknowledge our differences - Archbishop Tutu's 'Rainbow Nation'- but this is a descriptive and not an analytical approach.

- It emphasises our differences rather than our commonalities of interests and purposes.
- It invites us to learn about others' cultures rather than our own.
- It often ignores human rights and power relations.
- It does not promote anti racism, only multiculturalism.

The "One City Many Cultures" initiative in the Western Cape was a good example of a campaign that encouraged the citizens of the mother city to share knowledge about

their diverse cultures through the medium of the Cape Times. It was one of the most useful cultural dialogues that a South African newspaper had ever done especially as people exchanged personal experiences of their cultures. This avoided stereotyping and labelling.

What the campaign did not do, however, was highlight the most significant moments of the political struggle against racial oppression in the Western Cape which united its diverse communities through the United Democratic Front. Similarly, Cape Town's communities did not write about the racism embedded in their own cultures. This denial of cultural racism limits the analysis to a descriptive process that is useful but not all that effective in addressing the issue that is the subject of our Conference.

Political integration and human rights need to form the bedrock of the difference debate. The fight for racial and social justice and equality, one that challenges unequal power relations in political, economic and social institutions as well as ideologies that promote any form of inferiority or superiority will hopefully take care of our differences because it will focus our attention towards a common goal. We need not forget the lessons of the liberation struggle.

## 5 Tolerance

Tolerance is an ambiguous word for me. Sweet at face value, an honourable and abstract noun to encourage co-existence, offensive if used to suggest putting up with something unsavoury, and often dependent on underlying emotional contexts. I do not mind the word. I do not use it much. "Acceptance" and "Co existence" are preferable.

From the point of view of our multi racial societies, I believe it is more effective to propose that we accept our differences of race, gender, sexual orientation, language and others. Rather than simply tolerate them. However where these threaten the rights of others, we should propose a "no tolerance" ethic. Fortunately the Constitution goes a long way to protect the rights of all citizens.

It is socially irresponsible to tolerate racism, xenophobia and related behaviours. Civil servants and other service providers undermine their professionalism if they behave in a racist way towards clients and customers.

Our society also needs to encourage the acceptance of diverse perspectives. Diversity of thought can make for progressive political interaction and is an essential component in transformation. Bell Hooks, one of my favourite feminist writers, proposes that engaging in intellectual exchange where we hear a diversity of viewpoints about race and racism enables everyone to witness firsthand solidarity that has the potential of growing stronger in a context of productive critical exchange and confrontation. She writes,

' We must make spaces where we are able to remember, redeem and reclaim the past legacies of pain, suffering and triumph in ways that transform present reality, that give us a new take on the old, constructed to move us into a different mode of articulation. A remembering that is not nostalgic but one that serves to illuminate and transform the present'.

She also reminds us that ‘our struggle for a non racist society is also a struggle of memory against forgetting’.

The Tim Modise show on South African Broadcasting Cooperation, SABC, and the Jon Qwelane show on radio 702 are good examples of this kind of interaction. To hear the voices of black South Africans who articulate themselves in a language which is not their mother tongue, struggling sometimes to recover themselves, to reconcile, reunite and renew, is very encouraging. Mostly their words are not without meaning. They represent an action, a resistance to oppression. The sounds of their words cannot be appropriated or erased and attempting to do so will get us nowhere.

The voices of white South Africans which offer hope for the future and ways of addressing the ills of the past to reconcile, reunite and renew are equally encouraging. So is the constructive criticism directed at the government.

What we do not hear enough of, however, are the voices of our white compatriots sharing the memories of the past. The pain that Apartheid must have caused most of them is equally important. The meaningless killings, the lies and indoctrination, the erosion of their humanity must have left deep scars in the hearts and psyches of white South Africans.

Why are they so silent about being beneficiaries, why are they so silent about their dehumanisation? Is the silence not equally worrying? Will their voices not help the nation to rebuild itself? How many are telling their children of the horrors of apartheid? How many are actively developing anti racism as a value to live by like honesty, love and truth? Will they ever trust our new leaders now that they understand how that trust was betrayed? Were the majority of them not also victims of apartheid in a different way rather than only those who were caught in the cross fire?

Ampie Muller’s plea for Afrikaners [and others] to fully understand the flaws of their political philosophy and theology in their ideas on race and ethnicity and the myths surrounding their own group and its destiny is significant.

He admits that this is difficult because it means confronting our “shadow side”. If this is not done there is no guarantee of “never again”. He also proposes that maybe Afrikaner compatriots need their own Truth Commission where they can face themselves without feeling spied on, something that they cannot dismiss. Without coming to grips with the past, they stand to lose far more than the political power they have relinquished. They may lose the strength to be a separate distinct group in the rainbow nation, to have a separate identity, a culture and a language they can celebrate. He concludes,

“Until all groups investigate their complicity in the ‘old’ South Africa, the ‘new’ South Africa will be on hold”.

Our “positive peace” may not be built; neither will our “negative peace” be protected.

In conclusion, I appeal to all black South Africans to avoid seeking privilege because it can be discriminatory and undermine our noble goals for fairness. Moreover, we can learn from our white compatriots about what it feels like to give up that privilege.

Similarly I appeal to all white South Africans to stop seeing themselves as victims in the future. It is disempowering to be a victim. They can learn that from us. Being a victim gives you permission to renege on responsibilities and blame others for your own reluctance to shape a future for all our children. It is a different comfort zone that offers nothing in the same way that privilege did.

If we want our children to have jobs in the future then we should all take responsibility for growing our economy, transforming our institutions, educating our families and communities about the values entrenched in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and realising our goals and aspirations in the 21st century.

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#### **THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY TO COMBAT RACISM Panel Discussion by Hon Professor Kader Asmal Friday 1 September 2000**

This is not a "talk shop" on racism, as some detractors have said in the press. We stand in the midst of the unfolding of a new and extraordinary experiment in democracy and non-racialism. And we stand here a year before the Third United Nations Conference on Racism, scheduled to be held in Durban in 2001. At that conference next year we must also avoid the reduction of events into a talk shop; we must put flesh on the bones of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Because of our transitional miracle, which was the product of hard slog rather than mere magic, our President and our country are the best placed in the world to introduce issues of racial equity onto the global agenda, as we are already doing in global financial and trade organisations, for instance.

But before we take concrete action on the international stage, we need clarity and resolve on the national one. We are therefore here for action, not for talk. We are not here merely to express racial grievance; merely to celebrate blackness or to berate whites - as various media stereotypes have suggested. We have the political will and democratic mandate to launch an African reconstruction as far-reaching as - but also more enduring than - the American Reconstruction after the nineteenth century Civil War, which relapsed into American apartheid or Jim Crow.

On this score our history now differs fundamentally from the American history, from which useful analogies may nevertheless be drawn. Those who question the importance of this Conference and the government's attentiveness to your

deliberations, those who say we are here merely to make a fruitless noise about racism, should reflect on what Professor Patricia Williams, who spoke so eloquently yesterday, wrote in what is already a classic work, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*:

For [American] blacks, describing needs has been a dismal failure as a political activity. It has succeeded only as a literary achievement. The history of our need is certainly moving enough to have been called poetry, oratory, epic entertainment - but it has never been treated by white institutions as a statement of political priority . . . Some of our greatest politicians have been forced to become priests or blues singers. Even white descriptions of 'the blues' tend to remove the daily hunger and hurt from need and abstract it into a mood. And whoever would legislate against depression? Particularly something as rich, soulful, and sonorously productive as black depression. (151-52; italics added).

But it is different in South Africa. In South Africa now, blacks are able to decide the democratic agenda, as the President noted. We must not therefore be afraid to be frank with each other. But in the end, and in particular with this masterfully-conceived Conference that will have direct impact on governance and on real lives, the organising committee has done national service of historic importance. I commend them for his excellent work.

We are here today, by Barney's design, not to indulge in obscure analysis but to talk in plain language about legislation, much of it already on the books. Political and institutional power in this country - unlike other countries who have not really grappled with the scourge of racism - is no longer white-dominated. This Conference is a vital part of the process that will entrench the priority of black needs - not only expectations, as the President rightly mentioned, but also needs as Professor Williams describes. We are putting on our political institutions and culture the stamp of the continuing needs of the black oppressed.

So what exactly is the government's action plan? Let us start with Harold Laski who said that all government is administration. Without restructuring the apartheid administration, we run the real risk of reducing government itself (let alone this conference) to the talk-shop fate that we all abhor for ourselves. Administration changes the lives of people in ways that rhetoric never does. The President may have been right to say on Wednesday that not enough has as yet been done to learn from the miracle of the non-violent birth of our democracy, between 1990 and 1994. But he would not say that about our learning experience in government since 1994. After the first democratic election we faced the battle of the plains, the battle of the mountains having by then been won. We had to deal with what one writer called "the most difficult and least glamorous of all tasks: transition".

In 1998, the Presidential Review Commission appointed by President Mbeki's predecessor Nelson Mandela, reported back on the flaws in that unglamorous business: the inherited apartheid state institutions. The Commission's Report highlighted a lack of skills and capacity, a lack of organisational arrangements, a weakness at the centre of government, a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and even differing concepts of transition at work in different governmental departments.



The Commission Report made a range of suggestions for improving the capacity of government so that democracy might make its writ run in the real world. President Thabo Mbeki, having learned from the experiment (and miracle) of our first five years, has restructured Cabinet into working clusters, so that the sorts of interconnected problems that I highlighted in opening can be treated in multi-pronged ways. If gathered here today we are more than a mere talk shop; if we are in fact a group of people well poised to make our thoughts felt in the real world, it is because of these institutional reform efforts. The right hand now knows much more of what the left hand is doing, and new muscles are daily bulging on each limb. Hence the slogan of my own Department, Tirisano, which means working together. We are making governance itself work.

Our task in combating the legacy of apartheid racism must be to nurture our new and legitimate State, especially at provincial level, so that it can take the strain and stamp of our priorities: the meeting of black needs and the overcoming of racial divisions in order to form a unitary South African identity. Enough then about administration, let us shift focus to legislation. Again there has been an extremely busy Parliament since 1994, undoing all manner of discriminatory apartheid legislation. The centrepiece of this is of course the 1996 Constitution. We tried to get right what had gone wrong elsewhere, notably in the United States. Thus our Constitution sets itself against both “direct” and “indirect” discrimination, thus precluding the fraudulent rhetoric of “reverse discrimination” that has made so much headway in the United States. The political rhetoric of reverse discrimination certainly remains prominent in South African politics among those who seek to play on white fears for their own political gain and vanity. But because of our democratic mandate we as government and as the leading architects of the Constitution were able to ensure that this divisive rhetoric is not taken seriously in our fundamental legislative strategies. As any of the foreign colleagues among you will confirm, this is an immense achievement and the government remains firmly committed to this constitutional prescription.

But out of the Constitution other values and legislation also flow. So there have been racially equitable reforms in all areas of law and policy - from welfare to taxes, from education to policing, from housing to land and water reform. My speech could easily become a long list of these sector-specific achievements: undramatic but absolutely central to our transition away from racism and towards democracy. Instead, however - given limitations of time - I will focus on one piece of legislation that is of general importance and also happens to have passed into law relatively recently: the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (“the Act”) which was gazetted on February 9, 2000, a piece of legislation mandated by the Constitution and promulgated by the President today.

The preamble to the Act notes that “although significant progress has been made in restructuring and transforming our society and its institutions, systemic inequalities and unfair discrimination remain deeply embedded in social structures, practices and attitudes, undermining the aspirations of our constitutional democracy.” And the Act sets out to deal comprehensively with that problem. The Act is fundamentally premised, as its Guiding Principles set out in section 4 confirm, on the recognition of “the existence of systemic discrimination and inequalities, particularly in respect of

race, gender and disability in all spheres of life as a result of past and present discrimination brought about by colonialism, the apartheid system and patriarchy.”

The Act places upon the state a duty and responsibility to promote and achieve equality (s24(1)), which is a historic reversal of the apartheid state’s deliberate manufacture of racial inequality over decades. In addition, by section 24(2), all persons have a duty and responsibility to promote equality. This means that the private sector has no privacy from the imperatives of dealing with our legacy, from which apartheid-era businesses benefited.

The Act gives the Human Rights Commission, the convenor of this Conference, as well as any other relevant constitutional institutions, the right to request any state institution or private person to provide information on any measures relating to the achievement of equality, including information relating to compliance with relevant legislation, codes of practice and programmes.

In the four months since its promulgation, the implementation of the Act has in fact been somewhat delayed because of administrative hitches - which illustrates my point that all governance is administration. But one part of the impact of this conference - in which these implementation difficulties have been highlighted and criticised - is that we as government will have to move speedily on resolving them. It is a concrete instance of the priorities that you are setting as delegates and that we are accepting, as government, in order to meet legitimate black needs and expectations.

The Act ensures that no area of governance escapes the priorities of reconstruction and the move away from racial discrimination. Every Minister is mandated and required by law to implement within their portfolios measures aimed at the achievement of equality by:

- Eliminating any form of unfair discrimination or the perpetuation of inequality in any law, policy or practice for which that Minister is responsible; and
- Preparing and implementing equality plans in the prescribed manner.

These plans must include time frames for their implementation and these time frames must be determined in consultation with the Finance Minister: so these plans are not mere rhetoric cooked up in isolation from resource and other constraints. When approved and adopted, they will in fact be implementable and implemented. This is governance, not mere rhetoric or pie in the sky.

One participant at this Conference further drew attention to the fact that rights mean little if individuals of limited means are unable to reach out and enforce them, because legal costs are too high. It is therefore relevant to note that section 25(3) of the Act enables the relevant constitutional institutions - and I quote - “to assist complainants in instituting proceedings in an equality court, particularly complainants who are disadvantaged.”

Incidentally, in the area of racist sentiment as opposed to the continuing material consequences of racism, the Act is also relevant. The Act prohibits hate speech and racial harassment.

On the burden of proof, another vexed question on which Professor Williams touched in her comments, the Act is a model of progressive law making. Section 13 broadly

provides that once the complainant has made out a prima facie case of discrimination, “the respondent must prove, on the facts before the court, that the discrimination did not take place as alleged” or that the conduct was not based on a prohibited ground. The text of section 13 is a bit more detailed than that, but I would encourage you to study it in your own time. The point is that it alleviates the risk of placing an unrealistic burden of proof on the victim.

Lest all of this should sound a little abstract, the Act includes a Schedule setting out an illustrative list of what would constitute unfair practices in assorted sectors ranging from labour, employment, education, health care and housing through insurance services, sports clubs and the rendering of goods and services. The Act is having actual impact on the lives of all our citizens as we speak. It has already created discomfort and led to changed practices among, for instance, insurance companies which have become accustomed to red-lining both neighbourhoods and people with AIDS.

I have focused on a single piece of legislation. Many other laws such as the Employment Equity Act surround and bolster it in what is a comprehensive assault by this government, on the shaken and broken but not yet finally demolished edifice of apartheid. We must acknowledge that what apartheid wrought was a crime against humanity. Those who denied the criminality of apartheid in the past are the ones who shout loudest today about the new racism or the old bogey of “reverse racism”.

The Government is committed to the full implementation of the legislation including the strengthening of bodies involved in combating racism. We consider the establishment of the Equality Review Committee to be enormously important as it will identify practice, of which in a sense we have limited international comparative experience to aid us. There is no society on earth, not even the United States where the phenomenon of racism has been as much an integral part of the everyday life of a people, that has permeated all levels of a people’s being and self-perception, as it has been in South Africa.

We need to create a discourse where all see anti-racism and nonracialism as part of building a new South Africa.

There has never been a collective identity in South Africa. We need to coherently examine the experience of racism, the absence of a shared, common experience between black and white. It is because of that absence that every policy, every piece of legislation is viewed in different ways by blacks and whites, coming as they do from different points.

At the end of this Conference we should, all of us, address the question of what are practical ways of engaging all sectors of our society to play their part, however humble, in building a non-racial society.

Government has adopted appropriate constitutional and legislative mechanisms as part of the process of combating racism. Yet, because racism has engulfed the entire existence of people, over a long period of time, it is not possible to erase it merely by adopting a non-racial Constitution, however important this is, nor by declaring ourselves non-racial.

I will not present an Action Plan to combat Racism. Such a plan already exists in the National Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights adopted by the Government in 1998 following months of discussion between civil society and the Government. Therefore various components of an anti-racist strategy may already be in place. But we must put it there in a substantial sense by insisting on a programme where its realisation can be measured.

The suggestions below are meant to ensure that South Africans from all walks of life are engaged in programmes that would assist the process of building a non-racial society.

1. We should intensify and give more depth to the programme of deracialising our economy, by amongst other things speeding up the process of black empowerment and affirmative action. In this regard we have to review the manner in which we have done our work in this area. We need to deliberately and consciously work on genuine programmes of empowerment and transference of resources and skills to larger parts of the black community rather than to a few hand-picked individuals. We need programmes that will make a visible and lasting impact on the lives of black people.

2. One of the most advanced sectors of our economy is agriculture. Agri-South Africa, the umbrella body of organised agriculture, has consistently played an important role in engagements with government. It seems we have not taken full advantage of this rich resource at our disposal. We need a far more organised programme that will ensure that there is a close working relationship between the white and black farmers, that there is a systematic process of imparting of skills and a programme of uniting them as farmers facing the same problems. The starting point of course is for the white farmers to understand and be sensitive to the land restitution programme and therefore act in a manner that assists rather than impedes this work and to ensure that labour tenants are treated humanely and in accordance with the law.

3. As part of the skills transference, business, which is still mainly white, can play an important role in connecting with schools in the townships and rural areas by helping in the mammoth task of imparting computer and entrepreneurial skills, and in helping to share information and expertise on a whole range of areas that the past system has denied our people.

4. Primary and high schools as well as institutions of higher learning can also help build non-racialism by working on twinning programmes that will connect mainly black schools in the townships and traditionally white schools that enjoy better resources. Furthermore, there should be programmes that would help students to learn and understand their different backgrounds, cultures and languages, and design team-building programmes specifically aimed at integrating students and teachers. The special programme of the Department of Education on Democracy and Values in schools must be implemented.

5. One of the best ways for black and white people to begin to understand one another is through language. Generally blacks have a fair understanding of both English and Afrikaans. It is important for whites to break the barrier that exists in terms of communication and learn at least one African language so that they begin to

encounter the culture and the custom of Africans and therefore have a deeper understanding of their fellow South Africans. The extent to which we understand each other's idioms, beliefs and customs, will be the extent to which we understand one another as human beings, and thus be sensitive and responsive to each other's feelings and needs.

6. In addition, we need to use our rich cultural diversity to unite ourselves. By each of us learning our different songs, our various dances and our art we will be taking an important step away from our racist past towards a unified future.

7. We need to organise our sport in such a manner that it takes the process of non-racialism forward. A great deal of work is being done already. But it may be that we need to exploit the huge potential that sport has in uniting us. It is very important to use grass-roots sport to unite our children and our sports-people. It may also be important for sponsors to help this process by refusing to sponsor any sport that does not promote non-racialism.

8. Towards the end of the 1980s various churches had an important initiative of making South Africans meet and know each other. They called this initiative 'Townships encounters'. It was organised in such a manner that whites would go to the townships for a number of days and stay with people they had never met before and share with them their lives. Our Literacy Drive requires the full involvement of all our people and a reaching out to embrace the capacity and talent of our people in the service of our people.

*Issued by the Ministry of Education, 1 September 2000*

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RACISM - MS ANTJIE KROG**

**Saturday 2 September 2000**

#### **REFLECTION ONE**

Let me start with a story. A black father comes to pick up his child who had been playing with his white friend at their house. As the black father is knocking on the front door the two children come running round the corner of the house. The white child suddenly stops in his tracks: 'Is this your father?' he asks. 'Yes,' says the black kid, to which the white one responds: 'But why didn't you tell me your father is a kaffir?'

The woman who told me this story said that the black father confessed to not experiencing this incident as entirely negative. 'Its wonderful to know that children don't see colour.' I must admit that for me something positive also lurked somewhere, but it was only after reading the famous essays on the Political Morality of Race written by K Anthony Appiah, born in Ghana but currently a professor at Harvard, and Amy Gutmann, that I was able to understand what was happening in this story.

These two academics make a distinction between colour awareness and race awareness. In a society originally divided on the basis of colour, it is important to strive for a fair deal for all citizens. To achieve this social kind of justice, one has to be aware of colour, precisely because the disadvantage was lodged in colour. The two

kids of this story are of a different colour. Of course they are both aware of that. But they haven't burdened colour with the prejudices of race. It is only when the boy sees the adult black man that the prejudices of his community kick in. And that moment destroyed not only the relationship, but leaves the black child for the rest of his life with his unprejudiced trust blown apart by the humiliation of his father.

Arthur Ashe once said that it was easier for him to cope with AIDS, than it was to cope with being black. These kind of words and conferences like this one remind one that whites can never know what it is to be black. All the same, it is thus important to bear in mind two things:

- Scientists calculate that the average genetic difference between two randomly chosen individuals is .2 percent. Of that genetic diversity 85 percent can be found between any two people sitting next to each other in this hall. Nine of the remaining 15 percent can be found between ethnic or linguistic groups. Six percent represents differences among geographically more separate groups such as Europeans and Africans. If Europeans and Africans are regarded as separate races, only .012 of their differences is accounted for by race.
- Secondly, because prejudice is lodged in colour, because we have chosen to imbue colour with characteristics, because we have changed colour into racism, we have to, for the sake of social justice, be aware of colour. Restoration, reparation, programmes of change and improvement simply have to focus on colour. This has been spelled out over and over these past four days.

#### REFLECTION TWO

I find it a pity that no speaker from the continent was participating in this conference. As much as the African-American experience is insightful and informative, we will have to formulate our own response to it and input from a country like Namibia, Zimbabwe etc could have been interesting.

#### REFLECTION THREE

From the President's speech it is clear that it is highly problematic to steer this country between what he calls the 'fears of whites and the expectations of blacks'. But I think the problem can also be detected at a deeper level: how does one separate race from morality? The President is in a kind of bind. After three centuries of systematic destruction, he wants to restore black pride. He wants to prove to the country, to Africa, to the world that black people can not only rule more successfully, humanely, fairly, innovatively than other so-called successful governments, but that Africans can bring to the table unique answers to universal problems. So he has to be aware of colour and of race. But it is not only black capacity that has been affected, but the moral fibre of both white and black. We are emerging from a criminal past. In this case the President has to dismiss colour, saying to whites you have to redistribute resources and stand together with blacks to uplift the poor. The problem lies in how to restore the morality of both white and blacks, while at the same time restoring particularly the pride of black people.

Over the years it has also become my own problem. What I know today of humanity, of being human, of humane-ness I have learnt from black people before 1990. What I know today of reconciliation, forgiveness and integrity I have learnt from black

people in and before the Truth Commission. My perception of myself as an Afrikaner in this country and on this continent has been fundamentally shaped by black people. I have no concept of myself other than related to black people. But during all these years black people have also taught me there are good and bad white people, and there are good and bad black people. What matters is not the colour of your skin, but the colour of your heart.

Now where does this fit into the dialogue on racism? How does one prevent colour from becoming the only morality? As the President said: Whites didn't break ranks, although some did. But I remember that a group of black people in Cape Town turned up at the TRC offices wanting to ask for amnesty for apathy. We didn't do enough. What does one do with the differences among people? Whites benefited, but so did a number of black people. The people who killed in the past are of all colours. The hitsquads, the traitors, the puppets, the gangs, the army: they killed people of all colours. We cannot say all blacks are good and all whites are bad. What do we do about this? How do we keep reminding ourselves that everybody has in him or herself the capacity to care or to kill? Is racism to be the overall context or is it to be the moral fibre of caring and fighting for social justice? The day I am forced to side with whites whatever they do just because they are whites, or because black people feel I should be only with whites or Afrikaners - that day I give up my kidneys and my heart and move to Zimbabwe.

That is why I would caution politicians to tread softly with racism. It is the big web relating to all issues in this country. It links with responsibility, accountability, with power, resources - and the answers will touch every one of us. I am concerned that at this stage racism has in some quarters become a badge of honour. Whites would say openly: Yes I am a racist. Black people would say: I want a country without whites. It is very difficult in the end to contain these kinds of sentiments.

#### WAY FORWARD

A lot has been made at this Conference of the denial of whites and the breaking of silence. Contrary to what has been said here, there is a furious Afrikaner debate happening right now on the Afrikaans website called Litnet - a complete Boere Truth Commission where no-one could spy on them. It has become known among us as the Boetman debate. SABC journalist Chris Louw wrote an angry explosive letter of nearly twenty pages hammering the previous generation, the fathers, for always having the best of the apartheid world, even sending their sons to die in the army in order to hang on to privilege under the guise of volk and vaderland. It was like boring into a main Afrikaner artery. The response has been unlike anything anybody heard of before. People phoned, Louw's fax machine got jammed, newspaper columns ran letters for more than two months broadening the debate out to all the Afrikaners who have in the meantime left the country. It became an international Afrikaner debate where people talked openly about the dangers of authoritarian rule, of always saying ja pa, nee pa, goed pa, of not standing up against injustice. People confessed their guilt, their love for the country, people berated those who had left, accepted challenges etc. Since the publication of my book on the Truth Commission, for years afterwards I received letters, mainly from English speaking readers, and every one of them confessing to a particular moment when they realised racism was wrong. All of them plagued by guilt, concern and a need to know how to address this.

The problem of course is that all of it is a private debate. But it is there. People may deny publicly, politically, but in their heart of hearts, people know. Human beings know injustice and they know what they did.

But the question remains: what does this translate into? I remember hearing Archbishop Tutu once pleading with whites to take the hand of reconciliation. He was literally shivering as he pleaded. And I was thinking about all the gestures of reconciliation he has experienced, how many whites have come forward - not only as perpetrators to sit in humiliation whilst their leaders are ensconced in luxury pensions, but also the NG Church honouring him, sectors of the Afrikaans newspapers, Afrikaner business, individuals such as Leon Wessels of the SAHRC and so forth. Whites have come forward. Some of them have confessed, have asked for forgiveness - yet somehow it doesn't translate into a real feeling of change. Personally I had hoped that FW de Klerk would be able to rise to the challenge of a fundamental gesture of reconciliation - like Willy Brandt, to lay a wreath somewhere, kneel and ask forgiveness on behalf of us all from the victims. This of course, didn't happen. And it left a void in the national dialogue of guilt and responsibility. It was exacerbated by the fact that whites were no longer organised in one particular political party and were highly sceptical of politicians as a whole. In Cape Town a newspaper article asked: there is Tutu, there is Mandela, but where, oh where, is the white prince of reconciliation. And indeed - where is he (and it can of course only be a he)? And what should he do or say? What is the gesture that would unburden us all, release us into a new relationship? Because white individuals can try on their own on a variety of occasions, but it seems to me there is an immense need among black people to see this translated into a strong visual gesture which will for ever impact on our discourse. So that both black and white can look back to that moment and say: we did say we were sorry, and the others can say: yes they did.

It is with this in mind that I want to make the following plea - a plea to all white educational, cultural, religious and economic structures. 16 December is Reconciliation Day. Let us as whites, perhaps under the guidance of the churches, use that day - whether it is massive church services, or marches in every town, signing of a pledge, collecting money, or whatever - but let us have a moment, a precise point in the history of whites where we say, from this point onwards the debate about black and white in this country has changed for ever.

**CLOSING ADDRESS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA  
Saturday 2 September 2000**

Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission,  
Ministers, Premiers and MECs;  
Members of our Legislatures;  
Distinguished foreign guests;  
Fellow South Africans.

Thirty six years ago, a young man, who was facing the death sentence or a lifetime in prison, in fact a freedom fighter, made the following statement:

“During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black



domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society, in which all persons live together, in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

This man, who 30 years later became the first President of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa, emerged from almost three decades in prison to lead a country and made it his mission to promote national reconciliation.

Today we have realised the ideal of our beloved former President Nelson Mandela, of “a democratic and free society”, but the “harmony” and “equal opportunities” still elude us because of the historical legacy of racism that is still with us.

The last three days have sought to bring us into a dialogue about these noble ideals and, I believe, we are now a step closer to the ideal of a society living in harmony and with equal opportunities.

In his opening address, President Mbeki reminded us that “the social and economic structure of our society is such that the distribution of wealth, income, poverty, disease, land, skills, occupations, intellectual resources and opportunities for personal advancement as well as the patterns of human settlement, are determined by the criteria of race and colour.”

He ended his address on Wednesday with the question: “what shall we do to end the nightmare” of racism?

We would like to thank President Mbeki for his foresight and leadership as always in initiating this Conference in his State of the Nation Address in February of this year.

I believe that in the last three days we have seen constructive discussions and vigorous debate at this National Conference on Racism and have made much progress in finding answers to the President’s question, in ending this nightmare that has lasted for more than 350 years.

We have no choice but to end the nightmare, and we can only do this if we are bold and fearless about confronting the racism that is deeply embedded in our society, the racism that continues to dehumanise our people every day.

The Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, Barney Pitso, sees this First National Conference on Racism in South Africa as an epoch-making event and locates it within a series of significant dialogues that have shaped the very fabric of our society.

The significance of 1910 must not be forgotten.

We saw a process by which English and Afrikaner entered into a dialogue that established the Union of South Africa, a state that deliberately excluded the black section of our society and therefore forming the very basis of a racial state. Therefore that dialogue was not a truly national dialogue and it entrenched racism in our society.

Forty-five years later, at the Congress of the People, all South Africans, mainly black but not exclusively so, for all South Africans were invited to participate, engaged in another significant dialogue. This dialogue began to speak about non-racialism and defined how South Africa should be, in complete contrast to the one that occurred in 1910. It went thus:

“We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people.”

Forty-five years later, we meet in Johannesburg as a nation in dialogue, to plan and strategise how to shape our future and the century that lies ahead, into a non-racial century for the complete eradication of racism in all spheres of life.

It was only ten years ago that all our political parties in this country met in Kempton Park, in the first ever non-racial dialogue. The significance of this multi-party dialogue was that it produced a peaceful settlement that ushered in democracy to our country.

The importance of our present dialogue, as distinguished from those that have gone before, is that every South African has been invited, irrespective of colour, occupation and political affiliation, and thus this meeting is truly all-embracing.

Here the nation is in dialogue, not only its elected representatives.

This is the beginning of a new awareness of our legacy and of the special measures we need to combat racism. This dialogue, that deepens our democracy, has only just begun. Its meanings are only beginning to be clear. But this conscious confrontation of racism is the beginning of our homecoming as a nation. We have agreed to embark on a self-conscious effort against racism that empowers all our citizens to actualise a humanist vision.

This National Conference on Racism has not swept anything under the carpet. We have not carped for a solution from elsewhere. We have not submitted to a false feel-good sentiment.

We should all support the recommendation that an anti-racist movement be formed. Government takes seriously the call for a racism barometer and a racism audit.

Through the initiatives of civil society in partnership with government, we shall indeed go a long way in eradicating racism.

This is what has made this Conference a resounding success. This is what makes us proud to be South African. This is what reinforces our hope in the future.

It is this spirit of honest and brutal frankness that made our founding settlement in 1994 possible. That settlement, aptly captured in our Constitution, to which we all subscribe is that, and I quote:

“We the people of South Africa,  
Recognise the injustices of our past;  
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;  
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country;  
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

It is to honour the spirit of our Constitution that this Conference was necessary.

It is to ensure that the provisions of our supreme law become reality in our daily lives; that we were called upon to examine how far we are from the ideal of a democratic and non-racial South Africa.

And the call emerging from this Conference is that leaders must lead: to ensure that those who follow them become, both in word and deed, true South Africans, committed to the success of their country.

It is that we must together, black and white, act to end the injustices of centuries of apartheid and colonial rule.

Chairperson;

There is no magic wand that will remove the legacy of oppression and domination. South Africa's struggle against racism continues.

This is a struggle that united the majority of humanity in action for a democratic South Africa.

The world joined us because it was conscious of the fact that our struggle was part of the efforts of the human family for a world without racism and prejudice. If they expect us to play a central role in this continuing struggle, it is because they are confident that we have the character and the grit to do what history expects of us.

And, as they assemble here next year for the United Nations Conference on Racism, the delegates from all corners of the globe will be coming to learn and to teach. They will be reaffirming that South Africa is the epicentre of the global struggle for a world that cares.

For our own sake, and for the sake of humanity, we are therefore called upon to get down to work. If any confirmation were required, this Conference has reminded us that the challenge is immense.

Much, much more needs to be done to make our Constitution a living document.

We should spare no effort to ensure that the laws we have passed on equality and dignity are felt on our farms, factories and other work-places, schools, sports-grounds and other places of entertainment; as well as all our media.

The struggle against racism includes the challenge for South Africans to show confidence in their own country; to invest in their own economy and create jobs; to extend the ownership of the country's wealth; to speed up efforts to improve health, housing, education, water supply and other services; to reflect, as the media, the

reality of our country objectively; and to change the attitudes that bedevil human relations in our society.

I would like all South Africans to understand that no amount of legislation will completely eradicate racism.

I would like to appeal to you all, that in your interactions with fellow South Africans, in any decisions that you take, at a personal or professional level, you need to question yourself as to whether you are offending anyone, and, whether, in so doing, your actions are informed by the baggage of your past.

Chairperson;

The Declaration that we have adopted is a clarion call to all South Africans to join hands in this noble endeavour. It is an injunction to all of us - men and women, black and white - to put shoulders to the wheel to transform ours into a caring society.

If, when we hold a mirror to ourselves, as we did at this Conference, we are found wanting, this is not because we are marking time as a nation. Our courage to assemble in this forum reflects our confidence that we have started the journey to a bright future.

But we cannot rest.

And we dare not put off the difficult challenges simply because they are unpleasant to see and to hear.

We cannot afford to blame the doctor for diagnosing a problem in our body politic; nor can we blame our neighbour for our own submission when faced with difficulties.

As the stories of Gugu Radebe and of Monique and Kallie Strydom showed, we either swim or sink together. Those patriots are proud to be South African because they experienced in a situation of life and death, the warmth of a nation capable of standing together in the face of adversity.

So, Chairperson, we leave this Conference confident that South Africa has given itself the sustenance required for the long march ahead.

In this regard, we wish to congratulate the Human Rights Commission for a job well done.

And ultimate praise must go to the delegates, the local and foreign experts, the thousands who poured their hearts out at the Provincial hearings, and the overwhelming majority of South Africans whose determination to succeed is an inspiration beyond our own borders.

We would also like to acknowledge those journalists and ordinary South Africans who entered the dialogue even before the Conference began and thus set the scene for a fruitful debate.

The dialogue must continue. And we should join hands to find answers in the crucible of real life.

But in the prophetic words of a great son of Africa, Albert Luthuli, the first African to win the Nobel Peace Prize, in his book, *Let My People Go*, he writes:

“The task is not finished. South Africa is not yet a home for all her sons and daughters. Such a home we wish to ensure. From the beginning our history has been one of ascending unities, the breaking of tribal, racial, and creedal barriers. The past cannot hope to have a life sustained by itself, wrenched from the whole. There remains before us, the building of a new land, a home for men who are black, white, brown, from the ruins of the old narrow groups, a synthesis of the rich cultural strains which we have inherited.”

“There remains to be achieved our integration with the rest of our continent. Somewhere ahead there beckons a civilisation, a culture, which will take its place in the parade of God’s history beside other great human syntheses, Chinese, Egyptian, Jewish, European. It will not necessarily be all black; but it will be African.”

I thank you.

*Issued by The Presidency, 2 September 2000*

## **APPENDIX 2 GUIDELINES FOR WORKING GROUPS**

### **Theme I: The History, Nature and Sources of Racism**

Sub Themes:

#### **A. Racism in South Africa: A Historical and International Perspective**

Groups should generate an appropriately complex description of racism in South Africa from a historical and contemporary perspective. Racism is not an abstract concept that describes race relations in a vacuum. Rather, racism is, as David Goldberg has pointed out, a historically specific and culturally contingent phenomenon. Certainly the complexity of racism in South Africa cannot be understood without looking at the historical progression from the early origins of apartheid to democratic elections and the ensuing transition. Much of the particular form that South African racism takes, for example, can be traced to the lack of political representation and violent repression during the era of apartheid, and continuing difficulties with access to the political process for blacks. Much can also be gained by comparing South African racism to racism in other countries, both African and non-African, and by discussing the history of the international community as it relates to racism in South Africa. Groups should include the international aspect as well as the historical in their description.

## B. The Nature and Meaning of Racism

Groups should focus on defining and describing the nature and meaning of racism, and should generate a working definition or multiple definitions of racism to guide further discussion of remedies. There are many ways to define racism. One might define it to include any decision to distinguish or exclude on the basis of racial stereotypes, when such a distinction or exclusion has the purpose or effect of impairing the human rights or freedoms of someone of another race. More broadly, racism might be defined to encompass all features of a racist system. Such a definition might include the political, economic, ideological and other social structures (including, for example, racial stereotyping) that have produced a racialised underclass in South Africa; the current conditions that characterise those underclasses-lack of jobs, health care, housing, political access, etc.; and the racist consciousness that accompanies this system. Whether racism is defined broadly or narrowly, and the particulars of such a definition, will very much determine the range of appropriate remedies or strategies to combat racism. Groups may wish to raise other issues in the context of describing and defining racism.

## C. Causes of Racism

### Language, Religion and Culture

Groups should identify and describe the roles that linguistic, religious and cultural differences play in maintaining racism. Differences in language, religion and culture can be very important in defining one's identity. Our beliefs, affiliations, customs, rituals, and ways of expressing ourselves are a large part of who we are. But in a system of racial subordination, those differences have also taken on particular and negative meanings, to become markers for racial discrimination. These differences have also created some impediments to generating a shared vision for South African national unity. Groups should discuss not only the negative historical meanings attached to these types of differences but the way in which they interfere with reaching consensus on the direction for social change. Later panels in Theme 3 will also address this issue.

### Ethnicity

Group discussion should focus on identifying and describing the way in which ethnic divisions and differences both reflect and perpetuate racism here in South Africa. Members may wish to identify the way in which racism may impart negative meanings to ethnic differences in constructing a racial hierarchy. For example, historically, under the system of racial apartheid, ethnic differences between the Zulu and other Africans have produced violence and bloodshed, due in part to the fact that whites benefited from such division. More generally, Indians have been positioned below Coloureds and above Africans in the South African racial hierarchy, and ethnic divisions between these groups serve as the means by which racism divides them. Groups divided along ethnic lines may often struggle, against both the dominant group and each other, to escape the effects of racism and move higher in the racial hierarchy of privilege. Similarly, Africans may exhibit hostility towards immigrants from other countries as they struggle to move up the economic and social ladder.

Groups should specifically describe this and/or other ways that xenophobia and racism are related.

### Economic Causes of Racism

Groups addressing this sub-theme should focus on identifying and describing those economic processes that both reflect and cause racism in South Africa. Those economic processes might include the differing availability of capital along racial lines, the division of labour by race, and the long-standing monopoly that whites continue to maintain over resources and opportunities, both domestically and internationally. Economic competition between Africans and black immigrants, with both groups attempting to break into a market effectively monopolised by one race, may also contribute to racial hostilities between groups. Groups may also wish to evaluate the way in which poverty and lack of access to resources helps to maintain racism by reducing the ability of blacks to advance any movement toward social change.

### D. Social Behaviour, Stereotyping and Intolerance

Groups should generate a broad description of the way in which social behaviour based on stereotypes contributes to racism in South Africa. Discussants should also provide specific examples of how stereotypes have contributed to racism in specific areas like employment, education or criminal justice. Scholars have developed a range of ideas and explanations about the nature of social behaviour and racism-how and why people develop stereotypes based on race, and why they display hostility and intolerance based on those stereotypes. Some experts argue that white's very identity depends on racism-historically, white identity has been defined in South Africa, by drawing distinctions between the white person and the black "Other." Whites define themselves as virtuous, hardworking, intelligent, cultured, honest and morally upright, and define blacks, in contrasting negative terms, as lazy, stupid, primitive, dirty, dishonest, promiscuous and morally deprived. Thus, under this racist view, whites deserve better jobs, and blacks suffer from high levels of unemployment because they are lazy, not because of the legacy of apartheid. Similarly, whites attend school because they are smart, and blacks do not attend institutions of higher education because they are stupid, not because they cannot afford the tuition or have historically been denied an equal education. Group members may wish to draw on these or other ideas about social behaviour and stereotypes as a starting point for discussion.

### E. Responses to Racism: Anti-racism and Denial

Other groups later in the conference will discuss detailed programmatic strategies for combating racism. This discussion, in contrast, should focus on a more general description of the anti-racist response, and a discussion of why people respond in an anti-racist fashion. Anti-racist responses to racism can take many forms, and will inevitably be guided by definitions and descriptions on the nature and parameters of racism (see earlier panel description). What strategy or strategies should be the primary focus of an anti-racist response? Increasing awareness and education about racial stereotypes? Putting blacks, in positions of responsibility and power to begin dismantling racist structures and transforming institutions? Eliminating the conditions of racism-lack of jobs, health care, and housing? Groups may also wish to

discuss the economic, psychological or sociological factors that produce an anti-racist response from blacks and whites alike.

This group should also identify and describe the various forms of denial that policy makers are likely to encounter in response to discussions of racism. Participants often become defensive, particularly in response to charges that they have engaged in racist conduct. Discussing racism may threaten both whites and blacks (the latter vis-à-vis their attitudes towards black immigrants). Dismantling racism means a potential loss of racial privilege, power and/or economic status, and because charges of racism attribute to them socially unacceptable behaviour. In response, people may often engage in various forms of denial—they may falsely intellectualise the issue, diverting the argument to questions about scientific validity of factual descriptions, or they may attempt to defend their behaviour by claiming that it is legally protected. Alternatively, they may derail the conversation by focusing on their own emotional reactions to charges of racism, rather than on describing and remedying the racist conduct itself. Members of this group should identify and describe these and many other forms of denial that interfere with productive dialogue about dismantling racism.

## **Theme II: Contemporary Forms of Racism: Consequences and Impact**

### Sub-Themes

#### A. Institutional, Structural and Systemic Racism

##### Housing, Health Care and Social Development

Groups should identify and describe the mechanisms by which racism has become institutional, structural and systemic, in the areas of housing, health care (for the first group listed on the program), and in the areas of employment and social development (for the second group). Group members should also discuss the impact and consequences of such systemic racism on strategies for combating racism.

Structural, institutional and systemic forms of racism are often overlooked in identifying contemporary forms of racism. When racism persists over long periods of time, it often becomes embedded or “hardwired” (to use an information technology term) into institutional structures and systems. For example, even after the dismantling of apartheid, blacks continue to have difficulty getting access to the same level of health care enjoyed by most whites. Although blacks are guaranteed health care, black areas of the city and country remain under-served because of institutional and structural features of the health care delivery system. Graduates of South African medical schools, who are predominantly white, return to white communities, primarily in the cities, to take up practices that are well paying. Black students, who would be more likely to return to their communities to practice, are far less likely to be admitted to medical school because they cannot afford the tuition and because they have not enjoyed the same quality of educational preparation and training as whites. Black patients are also likely to be treated with a lower level of care than whites, because white doctors draw conclusions about blacks’ abilities to follow a health care or medication regimen, or do not value the health of black patients in the same way as white patients.



Similarly, inequalities in housing reproduce themselves structurally and institutionally. Blacks cannot afford housing of the same quality enjoyed by whites, and are not likely to soon be able to afford such housing, given racially-specific differences in job availability, educational training and preparation, and the availability of loans. Because a family's housing location often determines access to education and jobs, racial segregation and lack of access to housing reproduces itself over time. Group 1 members should identify and describe these and/or other institutional, structural and systemic forms of racism in housing, health care and social development/employment.

Group 2 should replicate the discussion in the area of employment and social development. Blacks continue to lag far behind whites in terms of access to opportunities. White employers are still slow to hire blacks, pay them equal wages or promote them into positions of responsibility or power. White employers are far more likely to hire applicants whose experiences and training resemble theirs, and whose appearance, credentials and cultural practices are familiar to them. Although the Equity in Employment Act prohibits racial discrimination, it does permit discrimination on the basis of inherent job requirements, and white employers cite differences in educational preparation and training to justify failure to hire and promote blacks. Racial differences in the ability to get jobs in turn affect other areas, like the ability to afford housing and health care. Group 2 members may wish to discuss this and other features of this issue.

#### Sport, Leisure and Recreation

Groups should identify and describe the mechanisms by which racism has become institutionalised in the areas of sports, leisure and recreation. Group members should also discuss the impact and consequences of such systemic racism on strategies for combating racism. Like inequalities in housing and health care (see above), racial disparities in sport, leisure and recreation may have become embedded into the structure of these activities, and racial disparities will reproduce themselves over time. Racist stereotypes contribute to the systemic notion that a competitive South African tennis player or golfer will be white. Owing to the legacy of apartheid, black participation in predominantly white activities and sports-like tennis, golf and ice hockey-continues to be unequal compared to whites. Because blacks have historically been excluded from participation, black sports programs in these activities are far less well established and correspondingly, black athletes are far less likely to be selected for professional or high-level competition. Funding for development of black sports programs and recruitment of black athletes, in turn, will suffer in the absence of black participation at higher levels of competition. In the absence of funding and recruitment, black participation will continue to remain low. Thus, racism in sports and leisure activities will reproduce itself over time, even if sports teams did not intentionally discriminate, which they continue to do. Groups may wish to discuss this example or generate additional examples of the way in which racism has become institutionalised in this area.

## B. Race, land and the geography of South Africa (who lives where and why).

Groups should discuss and describe, with an eye towards historical context, how racism causes and is caused by racial patterns in land and geographic location. The discussion in this group should focus on the impact of racism on land distribution and the location of different racial groups in South Africa, and the way in which those patterns serve to perpetuate and maintain racism. Racism historically has produced a highly unequal distribution of resources along certain geographic or spatial patterns, with the victims getting the least resources. The racist expropriation of land, as the product of successive colonial and apartheid regimes, produced tremendous disparities in land ownership; not so long ago, 70% of land in South Africa was in the hands of a white minority that constituted only 15% of the population. After apartheid, those lands that blacks came to own were often the most barren and infertile parts of the country and are located far from major commercial centres. Spatial disparities have a way of reproducing themselves over time; for example, if land owned by blacks cannot produce profit whether because of condition or location, blacks are far less likely to be able to purchase land in predominantly white areas, and areas will remain segregated by race. Groups may wish to include this self-reinforcing aspect of segregation and/or other features of the relationship between race and place in their discussion.

## C. Racism and Education:

From a South African perspective, groups should focus on how racism has affected the level and quality of education provided to blacks, and on the extent to which racist practices still subvert the goal of providing a good quality education for all. Education, especially formal education, is an essential part of a community's efforts to achieve full equality, and to dismantle racism. Without education, people cannot get high-paying jobs, avail themselves of business opportunities or the benefits of economic growth, seek high-quality medical care, afford decent housing, etc. In present-day South Africa, blacks continue to receive an education far inferior to the level of benefits that whites routinely take for granted. Disparities in funding and teacher availability often mean that black children are taught in classes with student-teacher ratios as high as 60 to 1, while white children enjoy far more individualised attention in public and private schools. Racist stereotypes still dictate much of education policy, causing some white educators to classify black children as uneducable, lazy, and not worthy of a significant investment in resources. Beyond these examples, groups may wish to identify and describe other examples of racist disparities in education, and also describe how educational disparities perpetuate and maintain a large part of racist systems and structures in other areas like employment.

## D. The Internet, Media and Hate Speech

In this discussion, groups should identify and describe the role the media, hate speech and the Internet have played in perpetuating racism and racial hatred. As the shaper of the public images of blacks and whites, the media plays a very important role in both perpetuating and dismantling racism. Recently, the South African Human Rights Commission conducted an inquiry into the subject of racism and the media. The Commission found that expressions in the South African media continue to reflect a persistent pattern of racism in terms of racist expressions and racist content. The

Commission also noted that news-rooms and media outlets exhibited continuing racial disparities at some levels of employment, and the Commission remarked on the relative lack of representation for black perspectives, viewpoints and expressions. Racist expression also finds form in hate speech, and on the Internet. Groups should pay particular attention to these latter two manifestations of racism, and identify and describe the impact that continuing racism in these areas has on South Africans.

#### E. Race, Law and Justice

In this discussion, groups should describe the impact of racism and racial discrimination on the function and effectiveness of the administration of justice in South Africa, and in particular, the criminal justice system. Groups should also describe how racism continues to affect the administration of justice in the new South Africa, and its ability to dispense justice. Historically, racism virtually dictated the administration of justice in apartheid South Africa. Justice was, to a large extent, the exclusive preserve of whites, and injustice was the daily experience of blacks. The coercive force and violence of the apartheid justice system was crucial to maintaining racism during that era. Even in post-Apartheid South Africa, racism continues to affect the delivery of justice. Blacks have little access to formal dispute resolution, they cannot afford the same sort of representation in criminal cases or civil ones as white defendants, and there are too few quality resources available for indigent defendants or litigants. A predominantly white judiciary continues to adjudicate in ways that unfairly disfavour or penalise blacks. To assuage white fears about “black crime,” police resources are targeted to protect white areas and/or white victims, and to control and restrain black communities. Blacks are then portrayed as wholly responsible for South Africa’s “crime problem,” which justifies more police expenditures and/or police brutality along the same lines. Groups may wish to discuss these examples more fully, or to generate additional examples in their discussion.

#### F. Racism in the market place

Proponents of capitalism argue that the free market will drive out racism, because it ultimately will prove less profitable than equality. However, economic forces (like the long-standing monopolies held by South African whites on resources and opportunities and the forces of globalisation) may well mean that the market is not completely “free,” and will fail to eliminate racism.

#### Economy and Globalisation

Groups should describe how the forces of economic globalisation have affected, and will affect, racism in South Africa. Economic globalisation promises the possibility of enhanced trade and profits, which potentially will lift victims of racism out of economic poverty and help to achieve equality. However, policy makers are concerned that globalisation may in fact only serve to exacerbate pre-existing disparities in wealth and resources between white countries and developing countries populated by blacks and other dark-skinned racial groups. Some have argued that globalisation will permit wealthy countries to more effectively extract resources and profits from developing countries, and black communities within relatively developed countries like South Africa. Indeed, globalisation may well enable white South Africans to step up their ability to exact unfair profits from the availability of black

labour. Groups may wish to focus their discussion on this debate, or generate additional points on the same issue.

### Finance, Business, Trade and Technology, and Access to Opportunities

Groups should describe and identify different forms of racism in finance, business, trade and technology, and identify their consequences and impact on South Africa. Financing for black entrepreneurs remains far less available than for whites-financial institutions often judge investment to be riskier for black companies in part because of racial stereotypes, but also because of differences in the type of business and management experience that blacks have relative to whites. White companies, both national and international, continue to prefer doing business with other white companies, again because of racist stereotypes but also because they are already familiar with the business practices of other white companies with whom they routinely do business, which gives those companies a built-in competitive advantage. Blacks have far less access to technology, and to education about technology, than do whites; given that technology is an area of extremely high growth in business and trade, a lack of access will create even more economic inequality between black and white businesses. Because white business-people tend to form networks of contacts with whom they are familiar, and within which they make available business opportunities, blacks tend to be excluded from these groups and have far less access to opportunities. Groups should identify these and/or other specific forms of racism in this area, and describe how these racist processes at work.

### **Theme III: Strategies to Combat Racism-The Way Forward**

#### Sub-Themes

#### A. Law Reform and Human Rights: Legislation, Monitoring, Enforcement, and Appropriate Institutions

Panels should work to generate concrete ideas and proposals for law reform. The group should generate and prioritise strategies in specific areas, and should also identify those institutions which should take responsibility for developing and implementing such strategies. Legal reform offers a wide range of potential strategies to combat racism. Legislation, like the recently enacted Equity in Employment Act, can play a very important role in accelerating the pace of social change. Organising politically to press for legislative change involves many activities, and many institutions, ranging from institutions affiliated with political parties, to NGOs, to organisations at the grassroots level. Of course, enforcement of legislative and constitutional protections is an essential component of law reform. Rights are enforced via public and private litigation and dispute resolution in the courts and in arbitration tribunals, and via more informal mechanisms of enforcement as well. To assure effective enforcement, organisations or individuals familiar with the law must monitor public and private activities. To effectively enforce the law, people must also be educated about their rights, and they must be guaranteed access to appropriate forms of dispute resolution, to pursue enforcement on their own behalf. Discussion Groups should generate specific strategies to address these and/or other issues, and identify the appropriately responsible institutions. Groups should also discuss how

other legislative, judicial and political measures could counter and redress racism and its effects on South African society.

#### B. Anti-Racism: Racism Awareness and Social Transformation

Groups should discuss generally the role of promoting awareness of racism in dismantling racism, and should generate specific strategies for increasing awareness of racism and promoting social transformation. Educating all South Africans about the nature and causes of racism is absolutely essential to any movement towards social transformation. There are many agencies in South Africa that organise “plunges” and trans-cultural dialogue; these programs are meant to increase sensitivity to racist practices and relationships characterised by racial power. The media can play an important role in promoting awareness of racism and encouraging discussion, by informing both blacks and whites of their duties and obligations under the law in relation to racism. The government might organise a task force and/or a series of town or province forums, to promote awareness of racism. Groups should discuss the value of such information programs, and generate additional concrete programmatic suggestions to increase the public’s understanding about racism and its consequences. Groups should also identify those institutions that can best develop and implement such suggestions.

#### C. Education and Training: Culture of Tolerance

Groups should discuss the general role that education and training will play in creating a culture of tolerance. Groups should generate specific concrete programmatic strategies in that regard. Any democratic civil society must educate its populace to create a culture of tolerance, but this sort of education can take many forms. For example, civic education can take place in the schools, but should continue outside the classroom into the community and country at large, perhaps via civic institutions. Creating a culture of tolerance raises many questions: what does tolerance mean, and what are its limits? Does tolerance require the acceptance of groups who promote racial hatred or racism, or can a tolerant society exclude such groups? Groups should generate ideas about how to define a culture of tolerance, and may wish also to address the substantive content of education for tolerance.

#### D. The Role of the Arts and Culture

Groups should identify and describe the role that arts and culture can play in advancing the commitment to end racism, and should generate concrete suggestions in that regard. A country’s arts and cultural practices are some of its most valuable resources in promoting anti-racism. Arts and culture can serve to remind South Africans of its racist history—songs from the Struggle, artwork depicting resistance during the Soweto uprisings, all can evoke memories to remind us of how far the country has come, even as art celebrates the transition from that era. Arts and cultural practices can also serve as expressions of the need for continuing anti-racist strategies, as they continue to chronicle the time moving forward from the transition. Finally, literature, music, dance and food can serve to heal divisions created by racism, and to promote understanding between races. These expressions of community experiences, values and aspirations can evoke deep emotional understanding where reasoned

argument has failed, and reconciliation where argument only brings division. Groups should discuss these and other roles for the arts and culture in dismantling racism.

#### E. The Family and Civil Society Institutions

Groups should identify the roles that the family and civil society institutions can play in dismantling racism. Groups should generate specific strategies for taking full advantage of those resources. Civil society institutions-institutions organised at the grassroots level by communities themselves, religious organisations, public service civic groups, labour movements-offer potentially one of the most important weapons in attacking racism and the effects of racist practices. These institutions provide the opportunity for dialogue and exchange, both within the organisations and between them and government institutions. The family also plays a potentially crucial role, because it is from within the nurturing embrace of the family that children are educated about the realities of racial oppression and the meaning and effects of racism. Groups should flesh out more fully the roles that these two institutions can play, and provide specific programmatic examples and suggestions to implement.

#### F. Reconciliation and Nation-Building: Towards A Common South African Vision

##### Religion and Language:

The way forward of course is not trouble-free. Any attempt to unite the country in eliminating racism must confront serious questions about the role that difference will play in a united nation. Groups should identify and describe the role religious and linguistic differences might play in a pluralist country united by a shared vision. Religious and linguistic expressions are often those practices that a racial, ethnic or cultural community holds most dear and most important to its identity. Any affirmative program to attack racism, by virtue of the fact that it addresses the question of difference, must attempt to define a place for religious and linguistic difference. Will a unified country require or promote a single shared language? What will be the role of religion in government or public life? How should we deal with people's fear that these differences will be sacrificed in the attempt to find common ground? This group might wish to specifically address these and/or other questions in connection with their discussion.

##### Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Groups should identify and describe what role racial and ethnic differences should play in a pluralist country united by a shared vision. Groups should attempt to flesh out the meaning of a non-racial society-whether that means colour-blind, or race-conscious in a particular way. As Cornel West has pointed out, in an age and reality where race continues to matter, the ideal of a colour-blind society may serve to actually perpetuate racism by concealing continuing inequality under the guise of a formal equality. It is clear, for now, that race still matters a great deal. For example, affirmative action programs of the sort envisioned by the Equity in Employment Act are premised on the idea that, owing to the legacy of apartheid, race continues to matter. Are those programs only a temporary measure, or do South Africans envision one day a country in which race plays no role in public life? Beyond the acknowledgement that race matters in negative ways, groups may wish also to discuss

the positive role that racial difference might play in a South Africa of the future. Racial differences are the source of helpful as well as negative meaning, as they frame our meaningful attachments, our social practices, our visions of ourselves. How will racial difference be accommodated publicly, and what role will it play, in a unified non-racial South Africa? Groups may wish to discuss this and/or other related questions in their conversations.

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Engen

Eskom

GlenRand MIB Ltd

Goldfields

Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)

Johnnic

Kagiso Trust

Ministry of Public Enterprise

Nedcor

Real Africa Holdings

South African Breweries (SAB)

South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)

South African Post Office Ltd

Transnet

Volkswagen